Preface; Chapters 3-5; 12; with maps from *Rome and the Near East: 31 BC-AD 337*, by Fergus Millar (Cambridge, MA., 1993):

3. Imperialism and Expansion, AD 74-195;
4. Rome and Mesopotamia: from Parthia to Persia;
5. The Tetrarchy and Constantine;
12. The Euphrates and Mesopotamia.

PREFACE

The subject of this book can be defined in three different ways: geographically, chronologically and linguistically. In geographical terms I mean by 'the Roman Near East' all those areas which lie between the Taurus Mountains and Egypt, and which were, or came to be, under Roman rule. The region concerned overlaps the territories of eight modern states: Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. To the west it is of course bounded by the Mediterranean, and to the north, somewhat less clearly, by Mount Amanus and the foothills of the Taurus. To the east and south the eventual limits of Roman military occupation did not correspond with any very definite geographical boundaries. The middle Euphrates, which for long served as a symbolic boundary between the empires of Rome and of Parthia, ceased to do so in the course of the second century. With that great change, to which I will come back many times, the Roman Empire in the east expanded decisively beyond the Mediterranean seaboard, with consequences of immense significance. By the end of the third century Roman control extended to, and in some not very clear sense beyond, the upper-middle Tigris. In the south-west of the area, similarly, the Roman military presence has left traces in part but not all of the Hedjaz, the barren mountain-range running along the eastern side of the Red Sea. What seems to be the furthermost Roman outpost here is Medain Saleh, a little over 300 km north of Medina.

The area concerned thus represents a large section of the Fertile Crescent; its definition as fertile reflects the fact that all of it shades off into what is often called desert, but is in fact at almost all points not desert but a flat, largely dry and often very stony steppe, in places coloured dark-grey or black from the presence of volcanic rock. To emphasise the fact that the zone along whose margins a great line of Roman roads and forts, from the Red Sea to

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the Tigris, eventually stretched was not a 'desert' of sand-dunes, I have consistently used the word 'steppe'. How we should understand the mutual relations of the Roman government, the settled population and the peoples of the steppe—*skēnitai* ('tent-dwellers'), *nomades, Arabes,* or *Saraceni*—is precisely one of the major problems which the book attempts to confront.

In chronological terms, as its sub-title indicates, the book starts from the moment of the battle of Actium and ends with the death of Constantine. It might reasonably have begun a little further back, with the arrival of Pompey's forces in Syria in the mid-60s BC. But the complex narrative of events in the late Republic would have either taken up too much space or failed to reveal much about the Near East itself, or most probably both. But some evidence, above all from Strabo's *Geography,* which relates to that period has been used.

Similarly, it could have been reasonable to end with the treaty of 298 or 299 which gave Rome firm control of the upper-middle Tigris; or, even more reasonably, to take as the terminal point the moment when, after the death of Julian in 363, Jovian was forced to cede Nisibis and the eastern part of the Mesopotamian shelf to the Persians. As it is, the book deliberately stops just when two related but separate major developments in religious history began; first, the formal recognition of the Christian Church by Constantine, and the construction of churches as visible, public features of the urban landscape; and second, something of perhaps equal significance in the evolution of Christianity: the ascetic movement, which so far as the Roman Near East is concerned began simultaneously in the south-western corner of the region, around Gaza, and in its north-eastern corner, around Nisibis, both in the early years of the fourth century.

Long ago, I imagined that I might write a social history of the Near East which would cover the whole period from Alexander to Mahomet. But the Hellenistic period has its own problems, which I tried to explore in a chapter in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White, *Hellenism in the East* (1987). As for the period of precisely three centuries from the death of Constantine to the first Islamic conquests, that must represent a major challenge for someone else. For a book on these centuries would have to embrace the great conflicts with Sasanid Persia which broke out again in the sixth century, and of course provided the context of the Islamic invasions of the seventh; late paganism and the definitive Christianisation of the region; the great Christological controversies and the flowering of Syriac Christian literature; the beginnings of Armenian Christian literature; pagan and Christian Antioch as a major political and cultural centre; Judaism—including the compilation of the 'Jerusalem' Talmud, contacts with Babylonia, and influence in the Hedjaz in the time of Mahomet; the Samaritans as an important community, capable of major revolts; and the significant role played by newly Christianised Arab peoples in the unsettled steppe zone between Rome and Persia.

It is thus very easy to see why no such overall history of the late-Roman and early-Byzantine Near East has ever been attempted; why one now does require to be written; and why it was beyond my powers at any rate to embrace these centuries along with the earlier period of nearly four centuries.

Even so, it was impossible to deny myself all hindsight, or all use of the vivid testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus, Theodoret and Sozomenus for the social history of the Near East, or of the *Notitia Dignitatum* for the structure of the 'desert frontier' as it had evolved by the end of the fourth century. Nonetheless there were very good historical and technical reasons for treating the period from the mid-first century BC to the mid-fourth century AD as a distinctive phase. First, from the point of view of Roman Imperial history, the step-by-step advance of Roman direct control demonstrates that, in the Near East at least, the idea that Roman imperialism and expansionism died out after the early Empire is simply false. More important, however, is the fact that these centuries saw the main flowering of the 'epigraphic habit' as expressed in the Near East. It should be stressed here that inscriptions represent the fundamental material on which the book is based. I have of course used all the literary evidence that I could find, among which the works of Josephus play an important role. I have also tried to make sense, for myself and the reader, of the complex geography of the region, with its very distinctive subregions. Thus, while the long first part is designed to give a conception of evolution over time, it is also intended as an introduction to the geography of the region. The various different sub-regions and local areas are then treated in the core of the book, the even longer second part. To make each section intelligible by itself, there has been some deliberate repetition at particular points.

In all this I have of course also used archaeological and iconographic evidence, though what follows is in no way an adequate study of the physical evidence. The book is primarily based on inscriptions, for two linked reasons: political structures, and language. First, my approach is essentially about politics and 'ethnicity'; about what political formations, including the Empire itself, were present in the region, and how people identified themselves and whatever wider political community they conceived of themselves as belonging to. The book is thus concerned with 'imagined communities' in the sense used by Benedict Anderson. For that, inscriptions are all-important. The Christian epigraphy of the late Empire, in Greek, more rarely in Syriac and (very occasionally) in Arabic, reflects a different outlook and a much-changed world. It is in the first few centuries, as is well known, that the 'epigraphic habit' does most to reveal political and communal structures.

It is this which then brings me to the third way in which the 'Roman Near East' can be defined: by language. The 'Near East' is, on this definition, that area of the Roman Empire where Greek (rather than Latin) co-existed with a family of Semitic languages. There is no simple way of listing these without being misleading. Nabataean, Palmyrene and Syriac are to be seen as dialects of Aramaic, written in the same alphabet, but with slightly different scripts. But that leaves us without a parallel term for the Aramaic used by Jews (and probably gentiles) in Judaea, or later 'Syria Palaestina', or that used by gentiles in the broad zone between the Jordan and the steppe, and north of the Nabataean kingdom. Greek observers tended to speak of all these languages or dialects, without distinction, as 'the language of the *Suroi*', and to refer to people using it (or them) as speaking *Suristi.*

Then there was Phoenician, written in the same alphabet of twenty-two letters, and only very slightly attested, on coin-legends and a couple of inscriptions, in our period; and Hebrew, normally written in the square Aramaic script, but for which the ancient 'Palaeo-Hebrew' script could be re-deployed for nationalistic reasons. Then, out in the steppe, but also attested at places in the settled zone, for instance at Dura and in Palmyrene territory, there are many thousands of graffiti written in 'Safaitic'—a mere nickname borrowed from the volcanic steppe called the Safa east of the Jebel Hauran. Finally, there is Arabic itself, attested on only two documents from our period—but that it is so attested is still a fact of the greatest importance.

One of the prime purposes of the book is to use the surviving inscriptions to draw a geographical and chronological map of the places and times where and when these various languages or dialects are attested, and to give some initial impression (it cannot be more) of how they were used and how they related to Greek. Latin too plays a significant part, above all (obviously) in military contexts and in the 'colonial' zone of Berytus and the Bekaa Valley. The reader will also find many instances of how the Greek actually used in this region, always the predominant language, was shot through with Latin words and proper names on the one hand, and with Semitic words and proper names on the other.

However limited their content, inscriptions have the overwhelming advantage for the historian of being tied to place and time: that is, of being found (generally speaking) where they were set up, and of being either explicitly dated or (at worst) broadly datable. A geography of language—or at least of *public* language—is thus attainable. But in the Near East the evidence of inscriptions is also, now, being ever more fully supplemented by documents on perishable materials, that is, papyrus or parchment: the priceless collection from Dura-Europos; the documents in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek from the

Judaean Desert, largely but not wholly relating to the Bar Kochba war; the 'archive of Babatha', of which the Greek items, sadly without their Nabataean and Aramaic counterparts, were admirably published in 1989 by Naphtali Lewis; and the remarkable Greek and Syriac archive of the third century from the middle Euphrates, still in the course of (very rapid) publication by Javier Teixidor, Denis Feissel and Jean Gascou.

How to represent this profusion and interplay of languages (in which a Syriac, Nabataean or Palmyrene text may contain a transliteration of a Greek transliteration of a Latin word) in an English text is an insoluble problem, in which true consistency simply cannot be achieved. This problem is paralleled by the equally insoluble problem that there is no agreed transliteration of modern Arabic place-names. As for the latter, so far as possible I have used the simplified forms which the reader will find on modern English maps of the Near East, sometimes giving variants where this seems necessary. But this hardly solves the problem, since there is no modern English map which gives more than a tiny proportion of village names. The text of the book tries above all to make sense of where places are in functional relation to each other.

The maps provided in the book follow approximately the sequence of regions discussed in Part II. They try to set at least a selection of the places named into an intelligible geographical context. It should be stressed that there are no cross-references to the maps in the main body of the text. The first map covers the whole area and indicates the sub-regions to which the following maps relate. No attempt has been made to list all the sites which can be identified or to give a consistent picture of what place-names were officially in use at any one moment; for one of the themes of the book is precisely how malleable these names were. The aim is to provide an intelligible guide to location. The maps, especially map II, are based on the excellent one in D. L. Kennedy and D. Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air* (Batsford, 1990), p. 25. Map IX, which for obvious reasons of geography has to be on a smaller scale than the others, is based on the map in G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (1983), facing p. 1. I am very grateful to Mrs. A. Wilkins of the Institute of Archaeology, Oxford, for drawing the maps included here.

As regards the use of Greek in the book, some rather short quotations in the Greek alphabet are given when necessary in the notes. Otherwise everything is transliterated, in particular with the intention of reproducing as accurately as possible the precise form of local rustic Greek, whether formally 'correct' or not; and, more important, of showing the exact spelling of place-names (often inconsistent in the original) and of Semitic or Latin terms or proper names in Greek transliteration. The long vowels *omega* and *eta* have been indicated as 'ē' and 'ō'. Outside quotations, I have largely used Latin forms, for instance 'Antiochia' (or 'Antioch') and 'Aurelius'; but in quotations from Greek, 'Antiocheia' and 'Aurēlios'. The inevitable inconsistency is emphasised by leaving such terms in whatever form they appear when I have used published translations. It will do no harm if this too serves to remind the reader that 'representing' the ancient world in an English text involves choices at every level.

As regards ancient Semitic scripts, I have adopted the device of using the same standard transliteration into capitals for all the Semitic languages involved. This may sometimes look odd, as with extracts from literary texts in Syriac, or even more so with rabbinic texts in Hebrew. But it has the practical merit of avoiding the presentation of material printed right-to-left within an English text; and it has the much more important function of instantly distinguishing transliterations from Semitic texts from those from texts in Greek; of exhibiting the widespread adoption of Greek (and some Latin) loan-words into these languages; and of revealing how close, as languages, they are to each other.

I should make explicit what will be instantly obvious to many readers, that I am not a Semitist by training. As is clear throughout, the book represents an expedition by a Classical ancient historian into Near Eastern territory. Whether this makes it a more or a less reprehensible example of 'Orientalism' in Edward Said's sense is not for me to say. On the other hand the deployment of Semitic languages here is not based on pure ignorance. I have a reasonable reading knowledge of Biblical Hebrew, and hence a basic grasp of the grammar of the languages concerned, other than Arabic. I need the assistance of modern works in approaching these various texts. But in the case of whatever is quoted, I would claim to have understood not merely what it means but why it means it.

If the book serves, by its manifest imperfections, to goad some Semitists into acquiring a wider historical training, or some Graeco-Roman historians into gaining a wider linguistic base, so much the better.

My concern with the Near East as it was in the Classical period goes back some quarter of a century, and should have been given expression in book form long since. But the stimulus to bring it to whatever fruition I could was provided by the very welcome invitation to deliver the Carl Newell Jackson lectures at Harvard University, which I gave in the spring of 1987. The hospitality of Albert Henrichs and his colleagues in the Department of Greek and Latin has left the happiest of memories of the week which my wife and I spent in Cambridge. With no disrespect to colleagues of my own generation, one particular privilege of the occasion was the presence of persons then in retirement: from Harvard itself Sterling Dow, John Finley and Mason Hammond; and from outside it Naphtali Lewis and Meyer Reinhold.

As will be obvious, even a Cambridge audience could not have supported the ordeal of hearing the whole text as it now is, or anything like it. It has taken another five years to deal with the subject in a way which I hope is not too inadequate; and in the course of that time the length of the text has increased far beyond what the benevolent editors of Harvard University Press would have wanted. I can only plead that I think the subject is important, and that even now the choice of ancient evidence and modern works to be referred to is at all points ruthlessly selective.

That selection itself could have been carried out, at least by myself, only with the unique resources of the Ashmolean Library and its Near Eastern wing, the Griffith Institute; of the Oriental Institute just next door; and of the Bodleian Library, in particular the Oriental Reading Room. It is above all when one attempts a topic which crosses some established boundaries that one realises just how remarkable this combination of resources is. But my 'base' has been, as always, the Ashmolean Library, and everything is owed to the help of Brian McGregor and his staff. It was thus there that during a sabbatical year in 1990–91 this book was at last written.

After prompt and helpful critiques from two readers appointed by Harvard University Press, a final revision was carried out in June 1992. Even those unacquainted with my handwriting will appreciate that preparation of the text was an extremely demanding task. So I am very grateful to Priscilla Lange for the efficiency and good humour with which it was done.

It will be clear that such a book, even with its many imperfections, would have been a great deal worse but for the guidance of friends and colleagues. My greatest single academic debt is to Sebastian Brock, who not only translated for me some recondite Syriac material when no printed help was to hand, but answered a long series of questions, some of them on points so elementary that he must have felt amazed that anyone could both be puzzled by them and have the temerity to write on these subjects at all. Not content with that, he kindly read the whole of Chapter 12, on the Euphrates and Mesopotamia, and saved me from many further errors. Martin Goodman also added to his many burdens as the newly appointed Reader in Jewish Studies at Oxford University by reading the whole text, with immense benefit to its clarity and accuracy. Of his predecessor, Geza Vermes, I need only state the obvious, that this book is in many ways the inheritor of our two decades of joint work on the new edition of Schürer's *History of the Jewish People;*

and from him too I learned an immense amount both during the writing of this book and long before.

This is not the place for a review of the names of the great figures, from Ernest Renan onwards, who have worked on the history of the Near East in the Classical period. But it would be improper, at the moment of the disappearance of the Soviet Union, not to mention Michael Rostovtzeff; apart from his years of work on Dura-Europos, his paper 'La Syrie romaine' in *Revue historique* (1935) remains the most brilliant brief portrait of the area. Then there is Henri Seyrig, whom I was fortunate to meet in Princeton in 1968, and whose work sums up the profound French involvement in the exploration of ancient Syria in the twentieth century. This involvement is reflected also in two major recent works, of which the earlier receives very inadequate reflection in what follows, and the later none at all: J.-M. Dentzer and W. Orthmann (eds.), *Archéologie et histoire de la Syrie* II (1989); and M. Sartre, *L'Orient romain: Provinces et sociétés provinciales en Méditerranée orientale d'Auguste aux Sévères (31 J.-C.–235 après J.-C.)* (1991), an invaluable work which covers Achaea, Macedonia, Asia Minor and Egypt, as well as the Syrian region (but not as such Mesopotamia).

Of contemporaries, I would particularly like to thank Peter Fraser; if in reality I have always seen Rome and its Empire from a Rostovtzeffian perspective, in other words from the Greek East, it is due to his influence when I was at All Souls in 1958–1964. As for others on whose generous help I have depended, I would like to name Jean-Charles and Jeanine Balty, Glen Bowersock, Hannah Cotton, Hazel Dodge, Han Drijvers, Denis Feissel, Michal Gawlikowski, David Graf, Chris Howgego, Ben Isaac, David Kennedy, Nikos Kokkinos, Sam Lieu, Michael MacDonald, David Potter, Jean-Paul Rey-Coquais, Maurice Sartre and Javier Teixidor.

Hazel Dodge and David Kennedy also provided valuable practical guidance before a visit to Jordan and Syria in 1986. During that visit I had very generous assistance from the Syrian Archaeological Service, and in particular from Dr. Adnan Bounni. It is not fortuitous that the book begins by implicitly recalling the many hours which I spent examining the marvellous collections in the National Museum in Damascus, not least the reconstruction there of the synagogue at Dura-Europos. During that trip I also spent a wonderful day on a taxi-journey from Homs to the remote site of Baetocaece (which proved extremely difficult to find), and then over the Jebel Ansariyeh to the Orontes Valley and Apamea, where the welcome from the Baltys and their team remains an indelible memory.

In 1989 I also had the greatest good fortune in being able to make a car-journey with Chris Lightfoot of the British Institute in Ankara, from Ankara through the Taurus to Cilicia, the Amanus, Antioch, Urfa, Nisibis, Amida (Diyarbakir), Commagene with Samosata and Nemrud Dag, and back via Malatya (Melitene). If in the course of it I gained a deeper understanding of why Caracalla had needed to step aside on the journey from Urfa to visit the temple of the Moon-Goddess at Carrhae/Harran, it was still an absolutely essential and invaluable experience, which would never have been possible without such expert guidance. I am very grateful to the British Academy and the Craven Committee for grants to assist this journey.

As one who has visited Israel many times (including in 1969 an adventurous trip with Zvi Yavetz up to the snowbound peak of Mount Hermon) and who has also looked out from ancient Gadara over the Sea of Galilee, the Plain of Jezreel and Mount Tabor, as well as down the Bekaa Valley from Tell Nebi Mend (Laodicea ad Libanum, just on the Syrian side of the Syrian-Lebanese border), it is impossible not to hope that these years will bring peace, and an opening of borders, to all of the haunting landscapes of the Near East. By down-playing, as it explicitly does, the significance, and even the reality, of any coherent 'Arab' identity in the period in question, this book might seem to take one side in the profound religious and communal tensions of the modern world. It does not. Religious affiliations, mythical origins and ethnic identities are human constructs, and we simply falsify history by fathering on peoples in the past identities which they did not construct, or had not yet constructed, for themselves. If anything, this book will serve to suggest how new, how profound and original and how totally unexpected in its effects the message of the Prophet was to be; but also, in its appeal to the Old Testament, to the inheritance of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael, how much Islam was to owe to the Judaeo-Christian tradition:

> Say you: 'We believe in God, and in that which has been sent down on us and sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender'. (*Koran, Sura* II, trans. A. J. Arberry)

At the point where this book stops, Islam still lay three centuries in the future. But all three versions of the Religion of the Book were formed in or on the borders of the Roman and late-Roman Near East.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAAS	*Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes* (1966–)
AAES	*Publications of an American Archaeological Expedition to Syria 1899–1900.* I, *Topography and Itinerary* (1914), by R. Garrett; II, *Architecture and Other Arts* (1903), by H. C. Butler; III, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions* (1908), by W. K. Prentice; IV, *Semitic Inscriptions* (1904), by E. Littman
AAS	*Annales archéologiques de Syrie* (1951–1965)
ADAJ	*Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*
AE	*Année épigraphique*
AHS	J.-M. Dentzer and W. Orthmann (eds.), *Archéologie et histoire de la Syrie* II, *La Syrie de l'époque achéménide à l'avènement d'Islam* (1989)
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
Anal. Boll.	*Analecta Bollandiana: Bruxelles, Société des Bollandistes*
Anat. Stud.	*Anatolian Studies*
Anc. Hist. Bull.	*The Ancient History Bulletin*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*
Ant. Class.	*L'antiquité classique*
Arch. Anz.	*Archäologische Anzeiger*
Arch. f. Or.	*Archiv für Orientforschung*

Avi-Yonah, *Gazetteer*	M. Avi-Yonah, *Gazetteer of Roman Palestine* (*Qedem* 5, 1976)
BA	*Biblical Archaeologist*
Baldus, *Uranius Antoninus*	H. R. Baldus, *Uranius Antoninus: Münzprägung und Geschichte* (1971)
Barnes, *New Empire*	T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (1982)
BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BASP	*Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*
BCH	*Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*
BE	*Bulletin épigraphique*, published in *Revue des études grecques*
BES	*Bulletin d'épigraphie sémitique*, published in *Syria*
Beth She'arim II	M. Schwabe and B. Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim II: The Greek Inscriptions* (1974)
Beyer, *AT*	K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (1986)
BGU	*Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden*
Bidez-Cumont	J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les mages hellénisés: Zoroastre, Ostanès et Hystaspe, d'après la tradition grecque* (1938)
Birley, *Septimius Severus*	A. R. Birley, *The African Emperor: Septimius Severus* (1988)
BMB	*Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*
BMC Arabia	G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia in the British Museum* (1922)
BMC Mesopotamia	G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia and Persia in the British Museum* (1922)
BMC Palestine	G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Palestine in the British Museum* (1914)
BMC Phoenicia	G. F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Phoenicia in the British Museum* (1910)
BMC Roman Empire	H. Mattingly, et al., *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum* (1910–)
BMC Syria	W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Galatia, Cappadocia, and Syria in the British Museum* (1899)

Bonn. Jahrb.	*Bonner Jarhbücher des Rheinischen Landesmuseums in Bonn und des Vereins von Altertumsfreunden im Rheinlande*
Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*	G. W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (1983)
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
Cantineau, *Inv.*	J. Cantineau et al., *Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre* (1930–)
Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen* II	J. Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen* II (1932)
Cantineau, *RES*	J. Cantineau, *Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique* I–VII
Cavenaille, *CPL*	R. Cavenaille, *Corpus Papyrorum Latinarum* (1958)
CCID	M. Hörig and E. Schwertheim, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni* (1987)
CIS	*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*
CPh	*Classical Philology*
CRAI	*Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions*
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*
Dam. Mitt.	*Damaszener Mitteilungen*
Dentzer, *Hauran*	J.-M. Dentzer (ed.), *Hauran: Recherches archéologiques sur la Syrie du sud à l'époque hellénistique et romaine* I.1–2 (1985–1986)
Devijver, *PME*	H. Devijver, *Prosopographia militiarum equestrium quae fuerunt ab Augusto ad Gallienum* I–IV (1976–1987)
DHA	*Dialogues d'histoire ancienne*
Dial. di Arch.	*Dialoghi di Archeologia*
DJD	D. Barthélemy et al., *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (1956–)
Doc. Masada	H. M. Cotton and J. Geiger, *Masada* II, *The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965, Final Reports: The Latin and Greek Documents* (1989)
Donner and Röllig, *KAI*	H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* I–II (1962)
DOP	*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*
Drijvers, *Inscriptions*	H. J. W. Drijvers, *Old-Syriac (Edessean) Inscriptions* (1972)

Dunand, *Musée de Soueida*	M. Dunand, *Le musée de Soueida* (1934)
Dunant, *Baalshamin* III	C. Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre* III, *Les inscriptions* (1971)
Dura Report	P. V. C. Baur and M. I. Rostovtzeff (eds.), *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Preliminary Report* I–IX.2 (1929–1946)
EAEHL	*Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* I–IV (1975–1978)
Edelstein and Kidd	L. Edelstein and I. G. Kidd (eds.), *Posidonius* I, *The Fragments* (1972)
Epig. Anat.	*Epigraphica Anatolica*
Feissel and Gascou, "Documents"	D. Feissel and J. Gascou, "Documents d'archives romains inédits du Moyen-Euphrate (III^{e} siècle après J.-C.)", *CRAI* (1989), 535
FGrH	F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*
FHG	C. Müller, Th. Müller et al., *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum* I–V (1853–1870)
Fitzmyer, *PAT*	J. A. Fitzmyer and D. J. Harrington, *A Manual of Palestinian Aramaic Texts* (1978)
Freeman and Kennedy, *DRBE*	P. Freeman and D. L. Kennedy (eds.), *The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East* (BAR Int. Ser 297, 1986)
Frey, *CIJ*	J.-B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaicarum* I–II (1936–1952)
Gawlikowski, *Temple palmyrénien*	M. Gawlikowski, *Le temple palmyrénien* (1973)
GCS	*Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*
Géog. admin.	T. Fahd (ed.), *La géographie administrative et politique d'Alexandre à Mahomet* (*Colloque de Strasbourg 1979*, 1983)
Géog. hist.	P.-L. Gatier, B. Helly and J.-P. Rey-Coquais (eds.), *Géographie historique au Proche-Orient* (*Syrie, Phénicie, Arabie grecques, romaines, byzantines*) (1988)
Gerasa	C. H. Kraeling (ed.), *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis* (1938)

Goodman, *Ruling Class*	M. D. Goodman, *The Ruling Class of Judaea: The Origins of the Jewish Revolt against Rome, AD 66–70* (1987)
GRBS	*Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*
Hajjar	Y. Hajjar, *La triade d'Héliopolis/Baalbek* I–III (1977–1985)
Halfmann, *Itinera*	H. Halfmann, *Itinera Principum: Geschichte und Typlogie der Kaiserreisen im römischen Reich* (1986)
HSCPh	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HThR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
Hüttenmeister, *Synagogen*	F. Hüttenmeister and G. Reeg, *Die antiken Synagogen in Israel* I (1977)
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*
IGLS	L. Jalabert, R. Mouterde et al., *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie* (1929–)
IGR	R. Cagnat et al., *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes*
I.K. Ephesos	*Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien: Ephesos*
ILS	H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*
INJ	*Israel Numismatic Journal*
Ins. Didyma	*Didyma* II, *Die Inschriften,* ed. A. Rehm and R. Harder (1958)
IRT	J. M. Reynolds and J. B. Ward Perkins, *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (1952)
Isaac, *Limits*	B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (1990; 2nd ed. 1992)
Ist. Mitt.	*Istanbuler Mitteilungen*
Jahrb. f. Ant. u. Chr.	*Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum*
Jahrb. f. Num. u. Geldg.	*Jahrbuch für Numismatik und Geldgeschichte*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*

Jones, *CERP*²	A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces,* revised by M. Avi-Yonah et al. (1971)
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JRA	*Journal of Roman Archaeology*
JRS	*Journal of Roman Studies*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JThSt	*Journal of Theological Studies*
Kennedy, *Explorations*	D. L. Kennedy, *Archaeological Explorations on the Roman Frontier in North-East Jordan* (BAR Int. Ser. 134, 1982)
Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*	D. L. Kennedy and D. Riley, *Rome's Desert Frontier from the Air* (1990)
Kettenhofen, *Kriege*	E. Kettenhofen, *Die römisch-persischen Kriege des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (1982)
Krencker and Zschietzschmann, *Römische Tempel*	D. Krencker and W. Zschietzschmann, *Römische Tempel in Syrien* I–II (1938)
Le Bas-W.	P. Le Bas and W. H. Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines recueillies en Grèce et en Asie Mineure* III.1 (1870)
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (1981–)
Mém. Ac. Ins.	*Mémoires présentés par divers savants à l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*
Meshorer, *City Coins*	Y. Meshorer, *The City Coins of Eretz-Israel and the Decapolis in the Roman Period* (1985)
du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire*	du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions palmyréniennes de Doura-Europos* (1939)
Millar, "Empire"	F. Millar, "Empire, Community and Culture in the Roman Near East: Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabs", *JJS* 38 (1987), 143
Millar, *ERW*	F. Millar, *The Emperor in the Roman World* (1977)
Millar, "Hellenistic Syria"	F. Millar, "The Problem of Hellenistic Syria", in A. Kuhrt and S. Sherwin-White (eds.), *Hellenism in the East* (1987), 110

Millar, "Phoenician Cities"	F. Millar, "The Phoenician Cities: A Case-Study of Hellenisation", *Proc. Camb. Philol. Soc.* 209 (1983), 55
Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*"	F. Millar, "The Roman *Coloniae* of the Near East: A Study of Cultural Relations", in H. Solin and F. M. Kajava (eds.), *Roman Policy in the East and Other Studies in Roman History* (1990), 7
Mitchell, *Armies and Frontiers*	S. Mitchell (ed.), *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (*BAR* Int. Ser. 156, 1983)
Moretti, *IAG*	L. Moretti, *Iscrizioni agonistiche greche* (1953)
Moretti, *IGUR*	L. Moretti, *Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romae* I–III (1968–1979)
Mus. Helv.	*Museum Helveticum*
MUSJ	*Mélanges de l'Université St. Joseph*
NC	*Numismatic Chronicle*
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*
OGIS	W. Dittenberger, *Orientis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* I–II
PAES	*Syria: Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria in 1904–1905 and 1909.* I, *Geography and Itinerary* (1930), by H. C. Butler, F. A. Norris and E. R. Stoever; II.A–B, *Architecture* (1919–1920), by H. C. Butler; III.A–B, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions* (1921–1922), by E. Littman and W. K. Prentice; IV.A–D, *Semitic Inscriptions* (1914–1949), by E. Littman
Parker, *Roman Frontier*	S. T. Parker (ed.), *The Roman Frontier in Central Jordan: Interim Report on the Limes Arabicus Project, 1980–1985* I–II (*BAR* Int. Ser. 340, 1987)
PBSR	*Papers of the British School at Rome*
P. Dura	C. Bradford Welles, R. O. Fink and J. Frank Gilliam, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos: Final Report* V.1, *The Parchments and Papyri* (1959)
PEFQSt	*Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement*
PEQ	*Palestine Exploration Quarterly*
Pflaum, *Carrières*	H.-G. Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres* I–III (1960–1961)
PG	J.-P. Migne, *Patrum Graecorum Cursus Completus*
Philol.	*Philologus*

PIR^2	*Prosopographia Imperii Romani*^{2}
P. Lond. inv.	F. G. Kenyon et al., *Greek Papyri in the British Museum* (1893–)
PLRE	*The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* I, *A.D. 260–395*, ed. A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris (1971)
P. Mich.	C. C. Edgar, A. E. R. Boak, J. G. Winter et al. (eds.), *Papyri in the University of Michigan Collection* (1931–)
Poidebard, *Trace*	A. Poidebard, *La trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie: Le limes de Trajan à la conquête arabe: Recherches aériennes (1925–1932)* I–II (1934)
Potter, *Sybilline Oracle*	D. S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* (1990)
P. Oxy.	B. P. Grenfell, A. S. Hunt et al. (eds.), *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* (1898–)
P. Yadin	N. Lewis, *The Documents from the Bar-Kochba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri* (1989)
P. Zenon	C. C. Edgar, *Papyri in the University of Michigan Collection* I, *Zenon Papyri* (1931)
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
RAO	C. Clermont-Ganneau, *Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale* I–VIII (1888–1924)
RB	*Revue biblique*
RE	Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenchaft*
REL	*Revue des études latines*
RES	*Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique* I–VII (1900–1950)
Rev. arch.	*Revue archéologique*
RN	*Revue numismatique*
RPC I	A. M. Burnett, M. Amandry and P. P. Ripollès, *Roman Provincial Coinage* I.1–2, *From the Death of Caesar to the Death of Vitellius (44 BC–AD 69)* (1992)
Sartre, *Trois etudes*	M. Sartre, *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine et byzantine* (1982)
SBFLA	*Studii Biblici Franciscani, Liber Annus*
SC	*Sources chrétiennes*

Schürer, *HJP*	E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 BC–AD 135)* I, ed. G. Vermes and F. Millar (1973); II (1979); III.1–2, ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. Goodman (1986–1987)
SCI	*Scripta Classica Israelica*
SDB	*Supplément au Dictionaire de la Bible*
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*
Segal, *Edessa*	J. B. Segal, *Edessa, 'the Blessed City'* (1970)
Segal, *Town Planning*	A. Segal, *Town Planning and Architecture in Provincia Arabia: The Cities along the Via Traiana Nova in the 1st–3rd Centuries C.E.* (*BAR* Int. Ser. 419, 1988)
Spijkerman, *Coins of the Decapolis*	A. Spijkerman, *Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia* (1978)
Starcky and Gawlikowski, *Palmyre*^{2}	J. Starcky and M. Gawlikowski, *Palmyre*^{2} (1985)
Stern, *GLAJJ*	M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* I–III (1974–1984)
TAPhA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
Wagner, *RET*	J. Wagner, *Die Römer an Euphrat und Tigris (Antike Welt, Sondernummer,* 1985)
Wenning, *Nabatäer*	R. Wenning, *Die Nabatäer—Denkmäler und Geschichte: Eine Bestandaufnahme des archäologischen Befundes* (1987)
YCS	*Yale Classical Studies*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*
ZDPV	*Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

THE ROMAN NEAR EAST

31 BC – AD 337

✦

CHAPTER

3

IMPERIALISM AND EXPANSION, AD 74–195

3.1. VESPASIAN: A NEW NEAR EASTERN EMPIRE

Looked at as a whole, the development of the provincial system in the Near East and the transformation of Roman military dispositions there in the late first century give every impression of representing an integrated plan, conceived in Rome and thought out with the aid of a map. Judaea, as we have seen, became a one-legion province governed by a senator of praetorian rank. Commagene ceased to be a dependent kingdom and became part of the province of Syria, as (it seems clear) did the kingdom of Sohaemus of Emesa, straddling the upper Orontes and stretching out a considerable distance into the steppe; and Palmyra, whatever its relation to the province before, was now clearly tied within it. But, most important of all, it is natural to see these developments in connection with the transformation of Cappadocia into a major military province, with two legions stationed at Melitene (Malatya) and at Satala, and a senatorial governor of ex-consul status. It was at this moment, in the 70s, that after nearly a century and a half the Roman presence in the Near East ceased to be a bridgehead and came to resemble an integrated provincial and military system.

It is at this moment too that documentary and archaeological evidence begins to play a fuller part; that has its own dangers of course, for we can never fully account for the logical gap between the first attestation of something which happens, perhaps by mere accident, to appear in our evidence, and the claim that that was when the pattern now attested first came into existence. Nonetheless the cumulative effect of all the evidence is such as to make it impossible to deny a radical transformation at this stage.

Whether it represented a plan, and if so, who formed it, where and when, is a more difficult question. The major step, which Suetonius attributes to Vespasian, and which Tacitus also alludes to, was the stationing of two legions in Cappadocia.[1] One of these was almost certainly the XVI Flavia, newly created and named after the Emperor, and stationed at Satala, 40 km west of the upper Euphrates.[2] Exactly how soon the legion was raised, and where, is not known, nor precisely when it arrived at Satala; but it certainly existed by the mid-70s.[3] The other legion to go to Cappadocia was the XII Fulminata, at Melitene; and it would be natural to see both dispositions as part of the creation, for the first time, of an extended 'Euphrates frontier' from the upper Euphrates through Commagene to Zeugma. But in fact Josephus attributes this displacement to Titus, distributing rewards and punishments to his army immediately after the end of the siege of Jerusalem in September 70, while Vespasian was already in Italy: 'Recollecting too that the twelfth legion had under the command of Cestius succumbed to the Jews, he banished them from Syria altogether—for they had previously been quartered at Raphanaeae—and sent them to the district called Melitene, beside the Euphrates, on the confines of Armenia and Cappadocia.'[4] One could not guess from the nature of this report, from a well-placed observer, that the move was part of a major strategic plan; still less, of course, that the legion was to stay there for several centuries and construct a permanent camp which would receive a detailed description from Procopius in the sixth century.[5] Nor was the central element of the 'Euphrates frontier' yet in place, as Commagene was still a dependent kingdom. For an account of how it came to an end, we are again indebted to Josephus, by now in Rome living in a house provided by Vespasian: no longer an eyewitness on the spot, therefore, but close to the Imperial court. Here too there is nothing on the surface of the account to suggest any overall plan. Whatever its limits, Josephus' narrative represents the most detailed description we have of the provincialisation of a dependent kingdom.

In Vespasian's fourth year, so 72 or 73, Caesennius Paetus, the *legatus* of Syria, wrote to Vespasian to say that Antiochus IV and his son Epiphanes had connections with Parthia, which should be forestalled before serious trouble began. Vespasian, thinking particularly of the strategic position of Samosata on the Euphrates, gave permission to Paetus to act as he thought fit. (We can assume that this exchange will have taken at least several weeks, depending as it will have done on messengers travelling in both directions.)[6] Paetus then invaded, taking the VI Ferrata, some *cohortes* and some *alae* of cavalry; with them once again were two kings with their forces, Aristobulus of Chalcis—not heard of before, and whose kingdom cannot even be securely located[7]—and Sohaemus of Emesa, marking the last appearance of his dynasty. There was no popular resistance; but Antiochus' two sons, Epiphanes and Callinicus, led the royal forces in a drawn all-day battle with the Roman troops. Resistance was ended only by Antiochus' determination to surrender.[8] Once again, as with Judaea and Galilee, we are concerned with an extensive, very fertile area which could support a large population, and which represented more than a trivial military problem.

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[1] Suetonius, *Vesp.* 8; Tacitus, *Hist.* II, 81.

[2] For this area and the new legion see T. B. Mitford, "Some Inscriptions from the Cappadocian *Limes*", *JRS* 64 (1974), 160, on pp. 164ff.; idem, "The Euphrates Frontier in Cappadocia", *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms* II (1977), 501, and "Cappadocia and Armenia Minor", *ANRW* II.7.2 (1980), 1169. The creation of the legion by Vespasian is recorded by Dio LV, 24, 3.

[3] Text to n.34 below.

[4] Josephus, *BJ* VII, 1, 3 (18), Loeb trans.

[5] See *Not. Dig., Or.* 38, 4; Procopius, *Aed.* III, 4, 15–18.

The newly acquired area was also, in military terms, a genuine frontier zone. For both sides of the river, Commagene, now Roman, with its capital, Samosata, right on the banks of the river, and on the other side Osrhoene, with its capital at Edessa, still under Parthian control, were part of the Fertile Crescent and the location of significant settled populations. It is even possible that the earliest example of Syriac literature, the *Letter of Mara bar Serapion,* which refers to people being driven out of Samosata by the Romans, and to others going to Seleucia (that is, perhaps, Zeugma), reflects the moment of the Roman takeover.[9]

What form the Roman occupation immediately took is not clear. As Josephus records, a detachment was sent to Samosata during the campaign. Then very soon after, in 73, a Latin inscription from the bank of the Euphrates at Ayni, slightly over halfway from Samosata to Zeugma, records that Vespasian and Titus had had constructed an *opus cochliae* (a screw to raise water from the river), in the legateship of Marius Celsus. The very ruined sculptural representation of the personified Euphrates which adorned the work is accompanied by another Latin inscription naming the III Gallica.[10] There can be no doubt, therefore, of the Roman occupation of the right bank of the river between Zeugma and Samosata. There is also no doubt that a road-system was constructed in the interior of Commagene, west of the Euphrates. For on the perfectly preserved Roman bridge over the Chabinas River, reconstructed under Septimius Severus, just enough of a fragmentary Latin inscription survives to show that a first bridge was built under Vespasian.[11] But whether there was immediately a line of posts along the Euphrates, and what force, if any, occupied Samosata itself, is not clear. It may be that a legion, perhaps III Gallica, was stationed here already in the Flavian period, but there seems to be no concrete proof. It is rather more probable, however, that IV Scythica was again stationed at Zeugma.[12] In between, the water-lifting screw installed at Ayni suggests at least a small fort on the river. North of Samosata, at Tille, there may also have been an auxiliary fort as early as this period.[13] Further south, at Tell el Hajj, Latin inscriptions mentioning a Cohors Secunda Pia Fidelis and the Cohors Prima Milliaria Thracum (attested in Syria between 88 and 124) suggest that there may have been a fort there.[14] The site lies on the Euphrates almost due south of Hierapolis.

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[6] See F. Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 BC–AD 378", *Britannia* 13 (1982), 1.

[7] For what little can be conjectured about this Aristobulus, see Schürer, *HJP* I, 573.

[8] Josephus, *BJ* VII, 7, 1–3 (219–245).

[9] See 12.3 below.

[10] *IGLS* I, nos. 65–66 (Ayni). See F. Cumont, *Etudes Syriennes* (1966), 248ff.; H. Hellenkemper, "Der Limes am nordsyrischen Euphrat. Bericht zu einer archäologischen Landesaufnahme", *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms* II (1977), 461, with sketch-map on p. 462.

How far to the south Roman control extended at any time before the 160s is quite uncertain, but it must have been considerably further than this. For, as has always been recognised, a very important clue to the extension of Roman active control in the direction of the Euphrates is provided by the well-known milestone erected in AD 75 at Arak (or Erech), some 27 km east-north-east of Palmyra, by M. Ulpius Traianus, the *legatus* of Syria in the mid 70s.[15] Unless we are to believe that this represents an abortive project, it must reflect the existence of a Roman road leading in the direction of Oresa (Tayibeh), continuing either to the Euphrates in the area of its confluence with the Balikh, that is, at Sura or Nicephorium/Callinicum, or even, alternatively or simultaneously, eastwards from Oresa to the confluence of the Euphrates and the Chabur at Circesium. At the least, therefore, we may suppose that Roman occupation now extended down the Euphrates to its confluence with the Balikh. These considerations of course presuppose that a Roman road marked out east of Palmyra would necessarily have gone as far as the Euphrates, which cannot be quite certain. In this period, before Roman occupation extended down to the lower-middle Euphrates and Dura-Europos, that is, from the 160s onwards, Dura itself was firmly Parthian; but Palmyrene outposts were established on the river further down. In other words what the famous milestone of Ulpius Traianus shows for certain is the firm integration of Palmyra within the provincial system of Syria; what it tells us about that system's relation to the eastern steppe and the Euphrates is less clear.

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[11] *IGLS* I, no. 38.

[12] Hellenkemper, op. cit. (n.10), 468–469.

[13] See J. G. Crow and D. H. French, "New Research on the Euphrates Frontier", in W. S. Hanson and L. J. F. Keppie (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies 1979* III (1980), 903; D. H. French, J. Moore and H. F. Russell, "Excavations at Tille 1979–1982", *Anat. Stud.* 32 (1982), 161.

[14] Ph. Bridel and R. A. Stucky, "Tell el Hajj, place forte du limes de l'Euphrate", in J. C. Margueron (ed.), *Le Moyen Euphrate* (1980), 349.

[15] *AE* (1933), no. 205: see G. W. Bowersock, "Syria under Vespasian", *JRS* 63 (1973), 133; M. Gawlikowski, "Palmyre et l'Euphrate", *Syria* 60 (1983), 53, on p. 60.

This process seems to have been accompanied by the disappearance of the dependent kingdom of Emesa, and its incorporation into the province. The evidence is no more than circumstantial. Sohaemus of Emesa makes the last appearance in history by any member of the royal dynasty in 72, assisting the Roman forces to suppress the dynasty of Commagene.[16] Then, in 78/79, a Greek epitaph from a funerary pyramid at Emesa (finally blown up about 1911 to make way for a petrol store) records a 'Gaios Ioulios Samsigeramos' of the Roman tribe Fabia, also called Seilas, son of Gaius Iulius Alexion, who constructed the tomb during his lifetime.[17] He may be a relative of the dynasty, and the text gives the impression (though no more than that) of reflecting a provincial rather than a royal context; no dynastic or other position is indicated. It thus cannot be proved at what moment the dynasty ceased, or under what circumstances. Coinage of Emesa as a city, with no king, begins only under Antoninus Pius.[18] It is, however, significant that in the Parthian war fought by Trajan in 114–116 no Roman dependent kings are recorded as providing forces.

The Roman Empire in the Near East had by that time entered a quite new phase, with the end both of the extensive kingdom of Agrippa II and of Nabataea. It is thus quite likely that the kingdom of Emesa had indeed disappeared in the 70s. If so, it would at any rate fit with two other items of evidence for the evolution of Roman control in this period. First, the milestone of Ulpius Traianus from a road going east from Palmyra would tend to imply the marking-out of Roman roads in the area further west. What happens to be preserved in our evidence is of course largely accidental. But it does so happen that there is another milestone of Traianus, dating to 75, from a site called Qorsi, some 75 km south-east of Apamea in the direction of Palmyra. The milestone might alternatively relate to a route running north-south through the steppe, between Chalcis (or Beroea) in the north and Emesa to the south.[19]

Second, although Roman forces were always able to, and did, traverse the territories of dependent kingdoms, the normal route they had taken when intervening in Judaea or Nabataea had always been, as we have seen repeatedly, along the coast through Berytus, Tyre, Ptolemais and Caesarea. It cannot be a complete accident that three of these places were now *coloniae* (and were listed as such by Pliny the Elder, writing in the late 70s).[20] If the territory of Emesa were now provincial, we would expect increased official traffic to have gone along the Orontes Valley, whether to diverge east of the mountain massif to reach Damascus or to continue down into the Bekaa Valley, into the inland territory of the *colonia* of Berytus, around Heliopolis.

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[16] Text to n.7 above.

[17] *IGLS* V, no. 2212. See R. D. Sullivan, "The Dynasty of Emesa", *ANRW* II.8 (1977), 198.

[18] *BMC Syria*, 237ff.

[19] J. Balty and J. C. Balty (eds.), *Apamée de Syrie, Actes du Colloque 1972* (1972), 108, no. 9 = *AE* (1974), no. 653. Qorsi is described as lying north-east of Sabbura, near which modern reconstructions of the road-network (not necessarily 'Roman roads') show the two routes mentioned as crossing. So R. Mouterde and A. Poidebard, *Le limes de Chalcis* I (1945), 47; for a more extensive plan, D. Kennedy and S. Gregory, *Sir Aurel Stein's Limes Report* I (1985), folding map at end.

It is thus wholly appropriate that the inscription which gives the most vivid and detailed reflection of the impact of Roman rule in this area towards the end of the first century should have been put up at Hama/Epiphania in the reign of Domitian (81–96) and should have to do with the demands of Roman official travellers. Epiphania, which as we saw will have gained its Greek name under Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 BC),[21] and in the Empire was a very minor place (a *polis?*) which never minted coins, lies on the Orontes some 45 km north of Emesa and 50 km south-east of Apamea. There under Domitian an extract from the Imperial instructions *(mandata)* given to the *procurator* (financial manager) of the province was somehow acquired, translated into Greek and put up in public, in what context is not known. Whatever the process of transmission of the text, the fact of its having been inscribed publicly can be confidently attributed to local initiative. Hence it is certain that the issues set out in it were of acute local concern. The text runs as follows:[22]

> From instructions of Imperator [Dom]itianus Caesar, son of Augustus, Augustus. To Claudius Athenodorus, procurator: Among items of special importance that required great attention by my father, the god Vespasianus, I know that he gave great care to the cities' privileges. With his mind fixed on them he ordered that neither by the renting of beasts of burden nor by the distress of lodging should the provinces be burdened, but, nevertheless, by conscious decision or not, deliberate neglect has set in and this order has not been observed, for there remains up to the present an old and vigorous custom which, little by little, will progress into law if it is not obstructed by force from gaining strength. I instruct you to see to it that nobody commandeers a beast of burden unless he has a permit from me. For it is most unjust that, either by the favour or prestige of certain people, requisitions should take place which nobody but myself can grant.

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[20] Pliny, *NH* V, 17/38 (Berytus); 17/75 (Ptolemais); 13/69 (Caesarea).

[21] Ch. 1 above.

[22] *IGLS* V, no. 1998, trans. R. K. Sherk, *The Roman Empire: Augustus to Constantine* (1988), no. 95.

> Therefore, let there be nothing which will break my instructions and spoil my intent, which is most advantageous to the cities, for to help the weakened provinces is just, provinces which with difficulty have enough for the necessities of life. Let no force be used against them contrary to my wish, and let nobody commandeer a guide unless he has a permit from me, for, when farmers are torn from their homes, the fields will remain without their attention. You, either using your own beasts of burden or renting them, will act best [———]

There is, however, yet more striking evidence for the increased investment by the Roman state in the Near East in this period, which has to do with the role of Seleucia and Antioch as the arrival-points of Roman communications by sea, and their interconnection with land-routes.[23] First, a cylindrical stone in the form of a milestone, found just north-east of modern Antakya, near the site of the hippodrome of Roman Antioch, records that under Traianus as *legatus,* in AD 75, a stretch *(ductus)* of three Roman miles of what is described as the 'Dipotamia(e?) flumen', with bridges, had been constructed by soldiers of various units.[24] 'Dipotamia(e?) flumen', an expression mixing Latin and transliterated Greek, must mean something like 'double river'. The only reasonable interpretation is that of D. van Berchem: the reference is to a canalisation of the combined course of the two rivers, the Orontes from the south and the Kara Su from the north, which meet a few kilometres above Antioch.

The fact that the Roman army was so heavily involved in the work probably implies that the canalisation served some Imperial purpose and was not purely for local benefit. It is true that the inscription shows that 'Antiochenses' were also involved, but whether as civilian labour or as soldiers is unclear. Two long and important Greek inscriptions from Antioch, however, also dated by the legateship of Traianus, show that work was simultaneously being carried out on an extensive water-channel for use by fullers, that is, for local civilian use. In this instance the labour-force was secured by corvée from the different quarters of the city, and Traianus is recorded as having merely 'supervised' the work.[25]

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[23] What follows is entirely dependent on the major paper by D. van Berchem, "Le port de Séleucie de Piérie et l'infrastructure logistique des guerres parthiques", *Bonn. Jahrb.* 185 (1985), 47.

[24] On the units concerned, see p. 89. The Latin inscription, first published by van Berchem in *Mus. Helv.* 40 (1983), 185, is *AE* (1983), no. 927, as revised in van Berchem, op. cit., 85–87. Translated in Sherk, op. cit. (n.22), no. 85a.

[25] D. Feissel, "Deux listes des quartiers d'Antioche astreints au creusement d'un canal", *Syria* 62 (1988), 77.

If it was in the Imperial interest to invest large quantities of military labour in a canalisation of the Orontes above Antioch, this was surely to prolong the navigability of the river, perhaps even to, and hence across, the lake of Antioch (which is now dry). Strabo in the *Geography* already records that one could travel by boat from the sea to Antioch in a day.[26] But this route, through a narrow gorge, must always have been difficult (and today no traffic at all uses the river). Hence it is no surprise to find that Pausanias records that major works had been needed, under an Emperor whom he does not name: 'The Syrian river Orontes does not flow throughout its whole course to the sea on level ground, but tumbles over a precipitous ledge of rock. Wishing, then, that ships should sail up the river from the sea to the city of Antioch, the Roman Emperor had a navigable canal dug with much labour and at great expense, and into this canal he diverted the river.'[27]

From the evidence given earlier it must be reasonable to suppose that the Emperor concerned is Vespasian, and very likely that military labour was used on the river below as well as above Antioch. This becomes all the more likely when we find military labour being used under Vespasian in a closely related but separate project at Seleucia, on the coast. On a small-scale map, Seleucia might look as if it lay almost at the mouth of the Orontes, and was literally a port for Antioch, some 25 km inland up the river. But in fact, while the Orontes reaches the sea at the south end of the coastal plain, at the foot of Mount Casius, Seleucia lies at the north end of the shore-line, below Mount Coryphaeus (a spur of Mount Amanus), some 10 km away. Its artificial harbour, dug out of the plain, remains clearly visible, as is (even more so) the well-known cutting and tunnel made in the side of Mount Coryphaeus under Vespasian to divert a stream from the port and thus prevent it from being silted up. The project was a major one, 1300 m in length and with a maximum depth of 50 m; apart from the building of roads and frontier installations, it would be hard to find in the Roman provinces examples of construction projects undertaken by the Empire on a scale comparable to those on the Orontes and at Seleucia.[28] Latin inscriptions with the names of Vespasian and Titus (and no doubt originally Domitian) make it certain that this work too was carried out by soldiers. This is confirmed by Greek inscriptions, from the earlier phases of the project, recording that work was done in sections, in one case under a centurion of IV Scythica and in another a ship-captain *(nau-*

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[26] *Geog.* XVI, 2, 7 (751).

[27] *Graec. Descrip.* VIII, 29, 3, trans. J. G. Frazer.

[28] See still the classic article by R. MacMullen, "Roman Imperial Building in the Provinces", *HSCPh* 64 (1959), 207; S. Mitchell, "Imperial Building in the Eastern Roman Provinces", *HSCPh* 91 (1987), 333.

archos). Other inscriptions record further work, by soldiers of IV Scythica and XVI Flavia Firma, under Antoninus Pius in about 149.[29]

Both projects, separate but closely comparable, thus represent a quite exceptional investment of effort and labour by the Empire. That labour, as noted before, was largely provided by soldiers. The Latin inscription of 75 recording the construction of a *dipotamiae fluminis tractus* lists four legions—the III Gallica, IV Scythica, VI Ferrata and XVI Flavia—and twenty infantry *cohortes.* From just this period, because of the developing use of individual bronze *diplomata* issued to discharged auxiliaries, we can begin to have a fuller picture of what these units were. The earliest *diploma* issued to an auxiliary soldier from Syria dates to 88, and (as they normally do) reflects a mass grant of rewards after twenty-five or more years of service (so going back to the early 60s). In this case three mounted *alae* and seventeen infantry *cohortes* are listed.[30] As most auxiliary units bore the names of the ethnic groups from which they were originally recruited, we seem at first sight to be granted an insight into the varied geographical composition of the auxiliary part of the Roman army: the groups mentioned come both from within the Near East—Ascalonites, Sebastenes and Ituraeans—and from far outside it—Pannonians, Gauls, Numidians, Thracians, Bracaraugustani from Spain and so forth. This impression is indeed valid as regards the original raising of such forces, and hence is of immense value. If we think only of units originally raised in the Near East, *diplomata* of the following few decades show a *cohors* of 'Damasceni' from which discharges are being made in 90 (hence in service by the 60s), and of 'Antiochenses' in 93, an *ala* of Ituraeans in Pannonia in 98, Tyrians in Moesia Inferior (the lower Danube) in 99, and, very significantly, the second Cohors Flavia of Commagenians in 100, with another, listed as 'the first', in 105.[31] Recruitment of auxiliaries had thus begun in Commagene immediately after the fall of the kingdom.

As is well known, however, it would be quite misleading to see the ethnic names of these units as proving the continued ethnic composition of the soldiers who served in them. The individual who received the *diploma* of 88 was Bithus son of Seuthus, a Breucan, who took the *diploma* back with him to his native Thrace; but he had been serving in a *cohors* of Musulamii, a people from North Africa. In other words, the presence of the various types of unit of the Roman army was very important as contributing to a complex process of mutual cultural influence, which it would be an over-simplification to call 'Romanisation'; but the ethnic names of the auxiliary units concerned will in most cases give clear evidence of the origins of the soldiers who served in them only at the moment of the initial raising of the unit. Nonetheless we would have a much clearer conception of the relevance of the army to the cultural and social history of the Near East if we knew how the *alae* (at least three) and *cohortes* (at least twenty) of the province were distributed; and at a more local level, whether they lived in camps, or occupied parts of towns or were billeted on the civilian population.

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[29] The inscriptions are *IGLS* III, nos. 1131–1140, discussed by van Berchem, op. cit., pp. 53–61.

[30] *CIL* XVI, no. 35.

[31] *CIL* XVI, nos. 36; 39; 45; 46; 50.

We gain a comparable (and equally partial) conception of auxiliary forces in Judaea from a *diploma* of 86, found in Hungary, to which it had been brought back by the recipient, a cavalryman named Seuthes son of Trabaithus, from an ethnic group called the Cololetici, who was serving in a *cohors* of Thracians.[32] The list of units from which discharges had been made includes *alae* of Gaetuli, from North Africa, and of Thracians; and *cohortes* of Lusitanians, Thracians and Cantabrians. The Sebastenes and Caesareans, originally raised as local royal forces, had, as Josephus noted, evidently been moved elsewhere by Vespasian.[33]

If we return to the important Latin inscription recording the construction of the *dipotamiae fluminis ductus* above Antioch, considerable importance attaches to the names of the four legions whose soldiers contributed to the work. The date of the inscription (though not necessarily of all the work) is 75. The four are III Gallica, which may already have been at Samosata; IV Scythica, which was probably already at Zeugma; VI Ferrata, which had taken part in the conquest of Commagene, and whose regular station is unknown; and XVI Flavia. As we have seen, this last legion had been created by Vespasian; the inscription from Antioch is in fact the earliest documentary evidence for its existence. Everything suggests that it either still was or at any rate until recently still had been in Syria. The building-up of Cappadocia as a two-legion province under a consular *legatus* was therefore, it seems, a process completed only in the mid-70s, and Josephus was not necessarily wrong to see Titus' despatch of XII Fulminata to Melitene as an isolated step of late 70. The first consular governor of Cappadocia is in fact attested in 76,[34] and the second legion, certainly the XVI Flavia, must have arrived there by then. If we look at the 'eastern frontier' as a whole, the diffusion of a permanent legionary garrison both southwards to Judaea and northwards to Cappadocia was thus a process which took place in two stages, but separated by only a few years. The two stages taken together, both within the reign of Vespasian, represent a considerable change in the strategic shape of the Empire.

If, alternatively, we look towards the Mediterranean, the reign of Vespasian *may* also represent, as van Berchem suggests, the moment of the creation of the 'Syrian fleet' *(classis Syriaca)* attested in the second century; but it cannot be proved.[35] What is clear is that this period, the 70s, produces a quite new level of evidence on the ground for the presence and impact of the Roman Empire in this region. This process is visible from the coast to the Euphrates, in the interior of Commagene, in the steppe on either side of Palmyra, on the middle Euphrates, and also of course in Judaea itself, where a legion now occupied part of the ruins of Jerusalem, and a detachment left behind some of its documents on the top of Masada. Fragmentary as our evidence is, we can observe both an intensification and a considerable geographical expansion of the Roman presence. An important aspect of both was the replacement of royal rule (as well as royal taxation and the maintenance of royal forces) by Roman provincial rule. Two further stages of this process were soon to follow: the absorption of the kingdom of Agrippa II and then that of Nabataea.

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[32] *CIL* XVI, no. 33.

[33] 2.3 above.

[34] B. E. Thomasson, *Laterculi Praesidum* I (1984), 264.

3.2. TRAJAN: EXPANSION AND REARRANGEMENT IN THE SOUTHERN NEAR EAST

With the absorption of Commagene the province of Syria had reached a natural 'frontier', in the sense not only of the upper-middle Euphrates itself but of the mountains of the Kurdish Taurus, round which the Euphrates sweeps through gorges in a great eastward bend between Melitene and Samosata. No route could follow the river through the gorge; and troops moving, like XII Fulminata in 70 or 71, from Syria to Melitene will have crossed the mountains further west.[1] In the southern part of the province, the kingdom of Emesa, on the upper-middle Orontes and stretching far out into the steppe, seems clearly to have been absorbed in the 70s, while Roman roads now extended to and beyond Palmyra. Only in the far south did there remain a complex pattern of royal and provincial territory, some of the latter still forming an enclave geographically separate from the rest of the province. By the mid-second century Gaza, on the coast, had certainly ceased to be an enclave separate from the province of Syria, and became part of Syria Palaestina (as Judaea was by then called). When this happened is not certain; but probably as soon as Judaea was put under a senatorial governor in the early 70s, for Pliny the Elder, writing in the 70s, describes the long trade-route from Arabia Felix as ending in Gaza 'in Judaea'.[2]

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[35] So also M. Reddé, *Mare Nostrum* (1986), 236ff.

[1] See the remarkable description of this area and the gorge in T. B. Mitford, "The *limes* in the Kurdish Taurus", in W. S. Hanson and L. J. F. Keppie (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies 1979* III (1980), 913.

A far more complex pattern is presented by the central mountain region of Lebanon, Anti-Lebanon and Mount Hermon, the territories to the south belonging to Agrippa II (including part of Galilee and Peraea) and then Nabataean territory. The absorption of Agrippa's territories, whatever these precisely were, represented the logical preliminary to the takeover of Nabataea in 106, and its conversion into the province of 'Arabia'. But we cannot state either exactly what Agrippa's territories consisted of or whether this absorption belongs in the 90s under Domitian or in 100 under Trajan.[3] It cannot indeed be certain that the process took place all at once.

In brief, since 53 Agrippa had ruled Batanaea, Trachonitis and Auranitis; the 'tetrarchy of Lysanias', apparently based on Abila, on the pass between Damascus and the Bekaa Valley; and the 'territory of Varus', of unknown location and extent, but apparently on Mount Lebanon. Nero had added considerable parts of Galilee (with the cities of Tiberias and Taricheae) and Peraea. Agrippa may have also have received further territory under Vespasian. At any rate as Titus marched back up the coast in the autumn of 70, he passed near a town called Arcea of the kingdom of Agrippa, lying between Berytus and Raphaneae in the Orontes Valley; this is the small place Arca or 'Caesarea ad Libanum', at the north end of Mount Lebanon whence the Emperor Severus Alexander was later to come.[4] It thus seems clear that Agrippa's domains were not geographically continuous.

All that is certain is that by the time Josephus was coming to the end of his *Antiquities,* completed in 93/94, Batanaea had become provincial territory. For we have already seen Josephus' sketch of the history of the colony of Babylonian Jews there, settled by Herod and later under the tetrarch Philip, Agrippa I and Agrippa II, but by now crushed by the tribute imposed by Rome.[5] Josephus might seem to imply that Agrippa was now dead. Reliance has often been placed on the statement in the *Bibliotheca* of Photius, compiled in the ninth century, that Agrippa died in the third year of Trajan, so 100.[6] Documentary evidence, however, makes clear that Batanaea and the surrounding area will have become provincial just about the time when Josephus was completing his *Antiquities* and writing the pendant to it, his *Autobiogra-*

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[2] Ptolemy, *Geog.* V, 16, 6, ed. Nobbe. See C. A. M. Glucker, *The City of Gaza in the Roman and Byzantine Periods* (1987), 41 (where the word 'not' is evidently a slip), Pliny, *NH* XII, 32/64.

[3] For the complex issues involved, see Schürer, *HJP* I, 471–483. The full evidence will not be cited here.

[4] Josephus, *BJ* VII, 5, 1 (97). See 3.4 and 9.2 below.

[5] Josephus, *Ant.* XVII, 2, 2 (26–28), quoted in 2.2 above.

[6] Photius, *Bib.* 33.

phy, where indeed he speaks of Agrippa as no longer living. The latest known document of Agrippa's reign is a Greek inscription from Sanamein in Batanaea dated by the double era of Agrippa to the years 37 and 32, so 92/93.[7] But some three years later local datings show that royal rule was over, and that the area was provincial. In the remarkable collection of antiquities, largely in the local basalt, in the museum of Suweida (Souedias/Dionysias) there is an inscription carved on a basalt grave-*stele,* and dated by the sixteenth year of Domitian, 96.[8] Within a year or so we have another dating in Greek by the first year of Nerva, 96/97, from southern Trachonitis.[9]

Whatever the precise personal history of Agrippa II, therefore, it is indisputable that the central area of his kingdom had become provincial territory before the end of Domitian's reign. As must already be clear, nothing whatsoever is known of the circumstances. But the most reasonable conclusion is that he died in about 92/93, and that his varied territories became provincial at that moment.

The southern area was in any case the most important, for it was that which bordered on Nabataean territory. In the short term all of this region presumably became part of Syria, with the effect that for the first time the land-area of the province was continuous into the Decapolis. It is perhaps relevant that an equestrian officer is recorded by an inscription as exercising some functions in 'the Decapolis of Syria' at some point under Domitian, probably around 90;[10] and that an inscription shows that the south theatre at Gerasa, or some of it, was dedicated in 90/91 'in accordance with a decree of Lappius Maximus, *legatus Augusti pro praetore*'.[11] Whether this is an accident of our evidence or not, no earlier evidence attests a governor's decision in this outlying region. Galilee and Peraea may now have reverted to Judaea; nothing is known. For a picture of a complete transformation of this whole area, we have to await the acquisition of Nabataea in 106.

Again, nothing is known of the circumstances. No conflicts with Rome are recorded in the long reign of the last king, Rabbel II, described in Nabataean documents as 'he who has given his people life and deliverance' (DY 'ḤYY WŠYZB 'MH).[12] His reign lasted from 70 to 106, and the latest record of it comes from his thirty-sixth year, so immediately before the Roman conquest.[13]

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[7] *OGIS,* no. 426 = *IGR* III, no. 1127.

[8] M. Dunand, *Le Musée de Soueida* (1934), p. 49, no. 75. See 11.3 below.

[9] *IGR* III, no. 1176, from the site described variously as Aeritae, 'Ahireh and Ariqah. See, e.g., the map in Dentzer, *Hauran* I.1, p. 138.

[10] B. Isaac, "The Decapolis in Syria, a Neglected Inscription", *ZPE* 44 (1981), 67.

[11] J. Pouilloux, "Deux inscriptions au théâtre sud de Gérasa", *SBFLA* 27 (1977), 246. See further 11.3 below.

[12] Fuller details on Rabbel in Schürer, *HJP* I, 584–585 (with some errors); Bowersock, *Roman Arabia,* 72–75.

All that we know of the moment of conquest, or acquisition, is a single sentence of Cassius Dio: 'About this time also Palma the governor of Syria subjugated Arabia around Petra and made it subject to the Romans'.[14] Speculation on motives, whether simply the occasion of the king's death, or local disputes or (improbably) an interest in trade-routes, is fruitless. This occasion, significant though it is, can contribute nothing to any discussion of the reasons for continued Roman expansionism in the Near East. All that is certain is that no alleged motive of the sort concerned in the suppression of Commagene—royal connection with a neighbouring power—can have played any part. For Nabataea bordered only on the steppe, except where it extended into the mountain-chain of the Hedjaz stretching down the east coast of the Red Sea. Complex as is the problem of the relations of the Nabataean area and its population to the unsettled peoples of the steppe, there is nothing to suggest that any large-scale military threat was felt from that direction.

If neither the decision-making process which lay behind it nor the campaign itself (if there was any real campaign) can be understood, by contrast the multiple effects of the annexation are very clearly reflected in our evidence. In strategic terms we know that, as Dio records, the operation was conducted from Syria, not from Judaea, and by the *legatus* of *circa* 104/105–107/108, A. Cornelius Palma, who duly earned triumphal *ornamenta,* a statue in the Forum of Augustus in Rome and a second consulate in 109.[15] What forces he took from Syria we do not know. All that is clear is that as early as 107 a governor of Arabia, Claudius Severus, was already in office. The same structure had been created as in Judaea, whereby a senatorial governor of ex-praetor rank was simultaneously the *legatus* of the province and of the one legion which was stationed there. The legion was the III Cyrenaica, which had been brought from Egypt, reducing its legionary garrison to one.

All this and more appears with great clarity in the famous papyrus letter of a soldier in III Cyrenaica written to his father in Egypt in March 107 from Bostra, to which he had just been moved. Since he explains that Bostra is an eight days' journey from Petra, the major city of the kingdom, it is probable that he had previously been stationed there. Strikingly, he also records that merchants were arriving from Pelusium in Egypt every day. The distances were considerable: certainly well over 300 km along the coast and across the

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[13] H. Jaussen and R. Savignac, *Mission archéologique en Arabie* I (1914), 217, no. 321.

[14] Dio LXVIII, 14, 5.

[15] *ILS,* no. 1023.

Negev to Petra, and some 260 km from Petra to Bostra in the southern Hauran.

In both this and a later letter from February 108 the soldier, Iulius Apollinaris, describes how, as a result of promotion, he can go around doing nothing while others toil all day cutting stones.[16] The reference may be to the most conspicuous landmark of the Roman occupation, the Via Nova Traiana, which ran from the Hauran down to Aila at the head of the Red Sea: as milestones of 111–117 put it in triumphal terms, Trajan 'after Arabia had been reduced to the form of a province opened and paved a new road from the borders of Syria to the Red Sea through C. Claudius Severus, *legatus Augusti pro praetore*'. Even these words hardly capture the dramatic impact of the road as visible from the air today, stretching along the Jordanian plain and then across the great Wadi Mujib (the ancient Arnon), which runs into the Dead Sea.[17] The total volume of stone-cutting must have been prodigious.

Iulius Apollinaris, writing from Bostra, may alternatively have been talking of the construction of a camp. For what seems to be beyond question the outline of a Roman camp (a rectangular enclosure of *circa* 463 m by 363 m) can be seen from the air attached to the north side of Bostra, whose plan as both a Nabataean and a Roman provincial town is clearly visible from the air and on the ground.[18] If this is correct, it is a rare case when we can give some meaning to the statement that a legion was stationed 'at' a particular town.

So profound a transformation of the region could hardly fail to register with the population living there. In Avdat in the Negev someone dated a building by 'year two of the province', using the Greek word *eparcheia* in transliteration: ŠNT TRTYN LHPRKY'.[19] A year later at Madaba someone dated a tomb in Greek 'in the third year of the province', but in Nabataean in a slightly different way, 'in the third year of the province (i.e., the provincial regime at?) Bostra': BŠNT TLT LHPRK BṢR'.[20] The expression may reflect a consciousness that that was where the main Roman base was. It will not, however, mean that Bostra was the 'capital of the province', for Roman provinces did not have capitals. By 114 an inscription on a Roman arch erected at Petra (as it seems, the earliest Greek monumental inscription from the Nabataean region) records Petra as a metropolis ('mother-city')—apparently, for the text has a gap, 'mother-city of Arabia'. That has no significance for the misdirected question of whether Petra or Bostra was 'the capital': the governor will have given jurisdiction at either, for Roman governors were peripatetic, and they certainly did give jurisdiction at times at Petra. On November 17, 130, one of the documents in the priceless 'archive of Babatha' shows someone summoning her to appear before Haterius Nepos, the then *legatus,* 'at Petra or elsewhere in the province'. But in the following year, faced with a summons by someone else to appear at Petra, she issued a counter-summons to her opponent to appear first before the governor at Rabbathmoab.[21]

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[16] *P. Mich.*, nos. 466 (107) and 465 (108). See, for this archive and other details of the early military occupation, K. Strobel, "Zu Fragen der frühen Geschichte der römischen Provinz Arabia und zu einigen Problemen des Imperium Romanum zu Beginn der 2. Jh. n. Chr.", *ZPE* 71 (1988), 251.

[17] P. Thomsen, "Die römischen Meilensteine der Provinzen Syria, Arabia und Palaestina", *ZDPV* 40 (1917), 1, sect. xx; Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*, 85–88.

[18] Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*, 124–125.

[19] A. Negev, "Nabataean Inscriptions from 'Avdat (Oboda)", *IEJ* 13 (1963), 113, p. 117, no. 11.

[20] J. T. Milik, "Nouvelles inscriptions nabatéenes", *Syria* 35 (1958), 227, p. 243, no. 6.

Auxiliary units were also transferred to the new province. So the Ala veterana of Gaetuli, which we saw in Judaea in 86, was later in Arabia, and its cavalrymen left graffiti, in highly erratic Greek, at Medain Saleh in the Hedjaz, the southernmost known Roman outpost, 900 km from Bostra.[22] Similarly the Cohors I Hispanorum and Cohors I Thebaeorum, recorded in 105 as having been transferred from Egypt to Judaea, may have gone on to Arabia; if so, then perhaps accompanying the legion III Cyrenaica. As for other units, their presence is even more speculative, or attested only later.[23] Certainty is not essential, for we could assume in any case that a number of auxiliary units arrived; the role of some of them in the inscriptions of the later second century and after will be discussed below. But the wider issue is important, for it involves the problem of what the army in this area was for, and in what sense the outermost area of Roman occupation represented a 'frontier'.

For the moment it is more important to stress that the acquisition of Arabia involved some reshaping of the provincial structure south of Mount Hermon. For a start, two or three cities of the Decapolis which had been part of the enclave belonging to the province of Syria now found themselves in Arabia: from south to north, Philadelphia (Amman), Gerasa and possibly Adraa.[24] The new order is perfectly expressed in the dedication to Trajan from the North Gate at Gerasa, on the part of the 'Antiochenes by the Chrysorhoas, the former Gerasenes, to their own saviour and (?)founder', put up under Claudius Severus, still there as *legatus* in 115.[25] A new boundary between 'Arabia', as a Roman province, and Syria thus now ran east-west through the Hauran to the north of Bostra and probably of Adraa also. What the situation was on the western edge of the Jordanian plateau (for instance with the city of Gadara, formerly in Syria or along either side of the Jordan) is remarkably unclear. It has to be admitted that this area might have been either in Arabia, or in Judaea or in Syria; Judaea is the most probable. Certainly the area of Scythopolis, in the Plain of Jezreel west of the Jordan, which had been part of Syria, seems now to have belonged to Judaea; for an inscription attests the presence there of an *ala,* earlier stationed in Syria, which by 139 at least was certainly part of the garrison of that province.[26] Similarly the Babatha archive (once again) shows that another auxiliary unit which had earlier been in Syria was by 124 stationed in Engeddi in Judaea, on the west shore of the Dead Sea. For in that year Judas son of Elazar, a resident of Engeddi, acknowledged receipt of a loan from Magonius Valens, centurion of the Cohors prima milliaria Thracum. What is more, the property which he pledged was located to the west of a military headquarters (*praesidium,* transliterated in Greek). The intensified presence of the Roman army could not be more clearly illustrated.[27]

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[21] Bowersock, *Roman Arabia,* 84, n.28; *AE* (1982), no. 904. *P. Yadin,* nos. 23 and 25.

[22] See J. Bowsher, "The Frontier Post of Medain Saleh", in Freeman and Kennedy, *DRBE* I, 23. I cannot follow the view that at least for a time the southern part of the kingdom (the Hisma and Hedjaz) continued as a dependent kingdom under Malichus, a son of Rabbel. So J. W. Eadie, "Artifacts of Annexation: Trajan's Grand Strategy and Arabia", in J. W. Eadie and J. Ober (eds.), *The Craft of the Ancient Historian: Essays in Honor of Chester G. Starr* (1985), 402.

[23] See M. P. Speidel, "The Roman Army in Arabia", *ANRW* II.8 (1977), 687, esp. on pp. 705 and 711–712; reprinted in Speidel, *Roman Army Studies* (1984), 229. On the garrison see also F. Zayadine and Z. T. Fiema, "Roman Inscriptions from the Siq at Petra", *ADAJ* 30 (1986), 199.

[24] For the very complex issues involved, not worth discussing in detail here, see M. Sartre, *Trois études sur l'Arabie romaine* (1982), ch. 1, "Les frontières de l'Arabie romaine".

'Arabia', as a province, certainly extended across the Wadi Arabah into the Negev and Sinai, and we have seen that at Avdat (Oboda) people began immediately to date by the new province. So far as is known, 'Arabia' did not reach to the Mediterranean, and the question of how real a presence Rome was able to establish in either the southern Negev or the vast expanses of the Sinai peninsula cannot be answered. But, as we will see when we look at the military structure of the Near East as it was at the end of the second century, Roman outposts are attested not only at Medain Saleh in the northern Hedjaz but at Dumatha (Jawf) in the Wadi Sirhan. The total area of the new *provincia,* if we think of it in the older sense of an area of military activity, was enormous, stretching over hundreds of kilometres.

The presence of Roman legionary and auxiliary soldiers will have been the most immediately perceptible aspect of the arrival of provincial organisation. Its counterpart was the raising of auxiliary troops, perhaps (it is not known) by a takeover of some or all of the royal forces. What is certain is that Nabataean troops entered Roman service immediately as regular auxiliary units. A diploma of AD 139 records men of the fourth and sixth cohorts of Petraeans being discharged in what was by then called Syria Palaestina; they should thus have entered service no later than 114. As another *diploma,* of 156, shows, all these *cohortes* (at least six, so three thousand men) raised in Arabia will have borne the formal title 'Cohors Ulpia Petraeorum', after the Emperor Ulpius Traianus, under whom their region became a province.[28] All the discharged auxiliaries gained the Roman citizenship, only one of the many complex changes in local society which Roman rule brought, and which will need to be considered later.

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[25] C. H. Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis* (1938), ins. no. 56/57 (C. B. Welles).

[26] R. Last and A. Stein, "Ala Antiana in Scythopolis: A New Inscription from Beth-Shean", *ZPE* 81 (1990), 224.

[27] *P. Yadin,* no. 11.

As we have seen on several occasions, in Syria and Judaea in AD 6, and in Batanaea in (probably) the early 90s, the most distinctive feature of Roman rule in a new area would be the imposition of the census and of direct taxation. For Arabia we do not have to envisage this impact through narrative reports written later, for two newly published papyri present the nature of the exchanges between the settled population and the new occupying forces in concrete detail. One of the documents forms part of the Babatha archive; the other may well have been found originally in the same desert area to the west of the Dead Sea. Both relate to a small area already mentioned, the village of Maoza in the district of Zoara, lying in the great depression south of the Dead Sea. Like the marriage-contract quoted much earlier,[29] these two papyri illustrate the use of written documents in Greek in a rural society remote from any town. The only town mentioned in them is Rabbathmoab on the Jordanian plateau, some 37 km away as the crow flies—and, more realistically, at an elevation of some 1000 m higher.

Both documents (and probably fragments of a third) are returns of land for the census of 127 under the *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of Arabia, Titus Aninius Sextius Florentinus.[30] The well-preserved document from the Babatha archive will be used to illustrate the new relationships involved in the census. There is nothing to indicate how many previous Roman censuses had been conducted before the current year: 'according to the compute of the new province of Arabia year twenty-second'. If a census had first been imposed in (say) 107, there may have been a ten-year cycle, with an intervening one in about 117. The document begins with the attestation of its being a copy of that posted in the *basilica* at Rabbathmoab. The declaration itself follows, starting with the dating: by Hadrian, the two consuls and the year of the province. Then comes Babatha's sworn statement:

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[28] *CIL* XVI, no. 87 (AD 139); 106 (AD 156).

[29] Ch. 1 above.

[30] (a) *P. Yadin,* no. 16 (quoted in part below, trans. N. Lewis); (b) N. Lewis, "A Jewish Landowner in Provincia Arabia", *SCI* 8/9 (1985/1988), 132. I cannot follow the interesting suggestion of A. Wasserstein in *JQR* 80 (1989), 93, that the expression τῆς νέας ἐπαρχείας Ἀραβίας in *P. Yadin,* no. 18, also used here, refers to a province called Arabia Nova in southern Palestine,

> As a census of Arabia is being conducted by Titus Aninius Sextius Florentinus, legatus Augusti pro praetore, I, Babtha daughter of Simon, of Maoza in Zoarene [district] of the Petra administrative region, domiciled in my own private property in the said Maoza, register what I possess (present with me as my guardian being Judanes son of Elazar, of the village of Engedi in the district of Jericho in Judaea, domiciled in his own private property in the said Maoza), viz. within the boundaries of Maoza a date orchard called Algiphiamma.

The text continues with more details, some very difficult to understand, but enough to make clear that each plot paid a fixed tax, calculated both in produce (dates) and in coin.

The document concludes with a record of the 'subscriptions' (formal statements 'written below' a document) made by Babatha herself and the *praefectus alae* stationed at Rabbathmoab. Nothing could more perfectly exemplify the role of Greek as the common language of the eastern Mediterranean and as the medium of communication between the Roman Empire and its Semitic-language subjects. For this paragraph translates into Greek both the oath made by Babatha in Aramaic and the subscription of the *praefectus* in Latin:

> Translation of subscription: I, Babtha daughter of Simon, swear by the *genius* of our lord Caesar that I have in good faith registered as has been written above. I, Judanes son of Elazar, acted as guardian and wrote for her. [Second hand] Translation of subscription of the prefect: I, Priscus, prefect of cavalry, received (this) on the day before the nones of December in the consulship of Gallicanus and Titianus.

To complete our impression of the meeting of languages, the document has on the back the names of five witnesses who have signed in Nabataean; the first is ''Abdu son of Moqimu, witness' ('BDW BR MQYMW ŠHD).

As hinted above, we cannot possibly say how far down the great new road to Aela, or into the Hedjaz or into the Negev or Sinai the Romans could find any settled population, or bring them within the operations of the census. But it should be stressed that only a series of accidents, in the ancient and the modern world, led to the discovery of these documents in the 'Cave of Letters' on the side of the Naḥal Ḥever between Engeddi and Masada. We can confidently assume that similar declarations were made all over the settled area of the former kingdom, at least from Petra in the south through the Decapolis and the area to the east of it shading off into the steppe, to Bostra and the

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distinct from 'Arabia'; (c) H. M. Cotton, "Fragments of a Declaration of Landed Property from the Province of Arabia", *ZPE* 85 (1991), 263.

Hauran in the north.[31] The area of the Near East to which Roman direct rule, Roman jurisdiction, and the Roman census and taxation were applied, widening stage by stage, and never possible to calculate accurately, will approximately have doubled since the battle of Actium in 31 BC. More significant than that, it had now stretched decisively outside those areas—northern Syria, the Phoenician coast and the Decapolis—where Greek cities were, or seemed to be, the predominant social form. It had at the same time, though the two processes are not to be equated, removed all the dependent kingdoms west of the Euphrates and substituted its own tax-gathering, military occupation and military conscription. It could also have been thought to have reached its natural geographical limits: all of the mountain-chain from the Taurus to the northern Hedjaz, all of the cultivable land between the mountains and the steppe, and all of the upper-middle Euphrates from where it emerges from the Taurus gorge to where the Fertile Crescent stops and the river turns south-east through the steppe. The reign of Trajan thus does indeed represent a sort of culmination. But the campaign which he fought in the second decade of the second century represented not only the first in the Near East in which royal forces could play no part, but the first which a reigning Emperor led in person, and the first which aimed at the permanent occupation of territory across the Euphrates.

3.3. THE ROMAN PRESENCE, AD 114–161

With the Parthian war fought by Trajan in the last years of his reign, the relation of the Near East to the Empire again entered a quite new phase, which was to last to and beyond the end of the Parthian Empire in the 220s, and its replacement by a new Persian Empire. Its features included Roman campaigns beyond the Euphrates, not merely from Cappadocia into Armenia but from Syria into northern Mesopotamia; the aim, achieved in the 190s, to make northern Mesopotamia into Roman provincial territory; and the conduct of these campaigns by Emperors in person. The eastern wars of the 350s and 360s, in which Ammianus Marcellus was to participate as an officer and of which he was later to write the history, went back, in their context and objectives, to Trajan's war. It was a continuity of which Ammianus himself was fully conscious; for he recalls Trajan's siege of Hatra, mentions the town called Ozorgadana on the Euphrates, where Trajan's *tribunal* was still pointed out; and reproduces Julian's speech to his soldiers reminding them of the victories in Mesopotamia of Trajan, Lucius Verus and Septimius Severus.[1]

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[31] See further 11.1 below.

[1] Ammianus XXV, 8, 5 (Hatra); XXIV, 2, 3 (Ozogardana); XXIII, 5, 17 (victories). See above all J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (1989), 130ff. My view of these events

As is well known, the two, or perhaps three, provinces formed by Trajan across the Euphrates were immediately given up. But if we take a longer-term view of this abortive project, it acquires a far greater significance. Exactly such a view is provided by the *Breviarium* of Rufius Festus, a brief survey of Roman expansion written in the 360s, some three decades after our period ends:

> At last under the principate of Trajan the diadem was taken from the king of Greater Armenia, and through Trajan Armenia, Mesopotamia, Assyria and Arabia were made *provinciae* and the eastern frontier was established on the banks of the Tigris. But Hadrian, who succeeded Trajan, jealous of Trajan's glory, voluntarily returned Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria, and wished the Euphrates to be the boundary between the Persians *(sic)* and the Romans. But afterwards under the two Antonines, Marcus and Verus, also Severus, Pertinax (?) and other Roman Emperors, who fought with varying fortunes against the Persians, Mesopotamia was four times lost and four times recovered. Then in the time of Diocletian, after the Romans had been defeated in a first campaign, and in a second battle king Narses was worsted . . . and when peace was made Mesopotamia was restored and the frontier was re-formed along the banks of the Tigris, in such a way that we gained the overlordship of five peoples settled across the Tigris.[2]

What matters about this passage is not the details in it, but first its perspective and second its implication for the continuity of Roman imperialist ambitions in the East from Trajan onwards. Nor need the controversial details of the Parthian war itself be explored.[3] What matters here is that Trajan, hearing that the Parthians had crowned a king of Armenia without his consent, came to the Near East in person (the first reigning Emperor to do so since Augustus), leaving Rome in autumn 113 and spending 114 on the establishment of Armenia as a province. The year 115 seems to have seen the creation of the province of 'Mesopotamia', a term which now (as later under Severus) meant the north-Mesopotamian shelf as far as Nisibis and Singara; the frontier may perhaps have been envisaged as running down the river Chabur from near Singara to its confluence with the Euphrates. It will have been the acquisition of these two new provinces about which Trajan sent a 'laurelled letter' to the Senate which arrived in February 116; for coins of 116 celebrated 'Ar-

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owes everything to the paper by C. S. Lightfoot, "Trajan's Parthian War and the Fourth-Century Perspective", *JRS* 80 (1990), 115.

[2] See J. W. Eadie, *The Breviarium of Festus* (1967); the passage quoted is sect. 14.

[3] For the chronology I follow the conclusions of F. A. Lepper, *Trajan's Parthian War* (1948), with adjustments by Lightfoot, op. cit. (n.1).

menia and Mesopotamia subjected to the power of the *populus Romanus*'.[4] It was probably in the same year that the kingdom of Adiabene, lying mainly beyond the Tigris, was conquered; if (as is improbable) there ever was a short-lived Trajanic province of 'Assyria', it will have been here.[5] Then, after a winter (115/116) in Antioch marked by a great earthquake, in 116 Trajan marched down the Euphrates to Ctesiphon, the Parthian capital, and then to the head of the Persian Gulf. There Cassius Dio describes him looking longingly at a merchant-ship setting off for India, and wishing that he were as young as Alexander.[6] This motive is by no means irrelevant to the growing Imperial preoccupation with the East. But then a general revolt broke out, and Trajan was forced to return, and to recognise the Parthian dynasty. He himself fell ill, and died, back on Roman territory, in Cilicia in 117.

Whatever else is unclear about this poorly recorded sequence of events, it is certain that *provinciae* of Armenia and Mesopotamia were indeed formed, before being given up by Hadrian on his accession in 117. For both a senatorial governor and a *procurator* of Armenia Maior are recorded on inscriptions;[7] and in 116 another Latin inscription, from Artaxata in Armenia, shows building being undertaken by soldiers of the legion IV Scythica, probably stationed at Zeugma.[8] At about the same time at least one Roman road was being constructed in Mesopotamia. For a milestone whose Latin inscription gives Trajan's titles as of 116 was found 15 km north-west of Singara, at a point where a pass leads over the Jebel Sinjar in the direction of Nisibis. (Nusaybin).[9]

This city, which eight decades later would find itself with the rank of a Roman *colonia,* played a key part in Trajan's campaign. For his route took him across northern Mesopotamia to the Tigris, and a bridge of boats was constructed by cutting wood in the forests around Nisibis and transporting it (about 100 km) to the river on waggons.[10] The reference must be to the foothills of Mount Masius (the Tur Abdin), just below which modern Nusaybin lies. At some point Trajan's forces besieged Hatra, in the steppe west of the Tigris and some 120 km south of Singara, no more successfully than Severus later, as Dio notes.[11] But in the 230s this place, encircling its famous temple of the Sun, was to be the furthest point to the south-east occupied by Roman troops.[12]

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[4] *BMC Roman Empire* III (1936), 221–222.

[5] See Dio LXVIII, 26, 4^1, equating Adiabene and 'Assyria'. There is no contemporary evidence for a province called Assyria, and no source earlier than the fourth century claims that there had been one. See, however, A. Maricq, "La province d'Assyrie créée par Trajan", *Syria* 36 (1959), 254, identifying Babylonia proper as the province of 'Assyria'. But see Lightfoot, op. cit. (n.1).

[6] Dio LXVIII, 29, 1.

[7] *ILS,* nos. 1041 and 1338; see Pflaum, *Carrières,* no. 95 (Armenia Maior).

[8] *AE* (1968), no. 510. For the legion's probable station at this point, see 3.1 above.

[9] *AE* (1927), no. 161. See D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq* (1968), 71–72.

[10] Dio LXVIII, 26, 1–2.

Roman forces also, as we have seen, advanced down the middle Euphrates, in the campaign of 116. They certainly remained at Dura-Europos long enough for the legion III Cyrenaica to erect an arch in honour of the Emperor to the north of the town.[13] They did not stay, however, and the place reverted to Parthian control. One citizen of the place duly recorded on a Greek inscription how he had restored a shrine there: 'and the original doors were taken away by the Romans, and after their departure from the city I made anew other doors for the same *naos* at my own expense, and outer doors also'. His inscription was dated to the Seleucid year 428, so between October 116 and September 117.[14] The evacuation need have no connection with Hadrian's abandonment of the provinces of Mesopotamia and Armenia. From the 160s onwards, when Dura was occupied by the Romans, it would belong to the province of Syria.[15]

The Parthian war was of great significance as a demonstration of the continued vitality of Roman imperialism—reflected not only in narrative accounts but in contemporary documents—and also as the first sign of a strategic commitment which would last for centuries, until the Islamic conquests, and which meant that Syriac literature would evolve largely within the bounds of the Empire. It also meant, in the shorter term, a renewal of relations with dependent, or potentially dependent, kings, of a type which, west of the Euphrates, had for the time being disappeared. When Trajan reached Antioch in the winter of 113/114, he was greeted by an embassy from 'Augaros the Osrhoenian'—that is, Abgar the king of Edessa—who sent expressions of friendship but did not appear himself, in the hope of remaining neutral. It was only when he reached Edessa itself that he met Abgar, along with 'Mannos, the *phylarchos* of the neighbouring part of Arabia, and Sporakes, *phylarchos* of Anthemousia'. Abgar laid on a banquet for the Emperor and, knowing Trajan's personal tastes, had his good-looking son dance 'in barbaric fashion' during the meal.[16] The dynasty of Edessa, which was to figure in a number of late-Roman and medieval Syriac chronicles, thus makes another of its sporadic appearances in Graeco-Roman narratives. It may indeed be that when Parthian control was restored, there was an interregnum for a couple of years.[17]

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[11] Dio LXVIII, 31.

[12] 4.1 below.

[13] *Dura Reports* IV, 57–65; VI, 480–482.

[14] *Dura Reports* VII/VIII, 128–134, no. 868, trans. C. B. Welles.

[15] See M. I. Rostovtzeff, "Kaiser Traian und Dura", *Klio* 31 (1938), 285. Fronto, *Principia Historiae* 10, the source closest in time to the event, confirms that Hadrian gave up *provinciae,* but does not say which, or how many.

[16] Dio LXVIII, 18, 1; 21, 1–3.

The partial nature of our evidence for these major campaigns means that we cannot assess in detail which legions from which provinces participated; and more generally the evidence for the movements and numbers of legions in these years presents complex problems which are not worth exploring here. It is clear at least that IV Scythica, probably from Zeugma, was in Armenia, and that some or all of III Cyrenaica was briefly at Dura. The XVI Flavia Firma from Satala naturally took part, as did the VI Ferrata, perhaps from Samosata, which is found operating in the mountains, evidently in Armenia; for a fragment of Arrian shows its *legatus,* Bruttius Praesens, equipping his men with snowshoes in local style.[18] The X Fretensis from Jerusalem also took part (there is as yet no concrete evidence of a Jewish revolt in Judaea, parallel to that in Egypt, Cyrene and Cyprus, at this moment).[19] More significant is the fact that a *tribunus militum* of the legion XI Claudia, stationed in Moesia Inferior (along the lower Danube), led cavalry detachments from that province and Dacia to take part in 'the Parthian expedition'.[20] For we begin at this point to have evidence of the importance of the land-route from the Balkans through Asia Minor via Ancyra (Ankara) and the Cilician Gates to Syria, and its role as one of the crucial links which made the Empire, for all the limitations imposed by space and time, a unitary organism in military terms.[21] From Ancyra itself at this time we have the honorific inscription of a local magnate who had 'received' (that is, supplied) the forces wintering in the city and had 'sent forward (with supplies again) those on their way to the war against the Parthians'.[22]

Yet the sea-route to northern Syria, though it certainly never carried troops en masse, nor could have, remained significant. Trajan himself had travelled through the province of Asia and then Lycia, arriving by sea at Seleucia.[23] It was in the second century, if not for certain before, that we can see Seleucia emerging as an established naval base. The Latin epitaphs of officers and sailors, from both the 'Syrian fleet' (now named as such for the first time) and those of Misenum and Ravenna, inscribed at Seleucia, reflect its importance in communications and represent a small island of Romanisation, and the use of the Latin language.[24] So we find at Seleucia Pieria in 166 an *optio* of the Misenum fleet making a contract, in Latin and Greek, for the purchase from a sailor of the same fleet of a slave-boy 'from across the river [*transfluminianum*]', called Abba or also Eutyches.[25] Then, as in 114–116, Roman armies were operating beyond the river Euphrates, captives will have been available in larger than normal numbers, and ships from other fleets will have come to Seleucia. D. van Berchem may well be right to suggest that we need to envisage a network of communications and supplies stretching from the Mediterranean through Seleucia to northern Syria and the Euphrates. That would explain why one of the very rare Latin honorific inscriptions from Syria was erected to a prefect of the Misenum fleet, Marcius Turbo, in about 114, precisely at Cyrrhus, on one of the two main routes from Antioch to Zeugma.[26] Whether we would think of supplies, rather than forces, travelling over such distances is uncertain; but in later campaigns we do know that supplies were shipped from southern Asia Minor to Syria for the armies;[27] and, while we must resist too confident a reconstruction of a supply network, an inscription from Caria does record an equestrian officer who had been 'in charge of supplies in the Parthian war on the bank of the Euphrates'.[28]

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[17] For the eighth-century *Chronicle of Zuqnin* see App. C.

[18] *ILS,* no. 2660 (XVI Flavia Firma); Arrian, *Parthica,* Fr. 85; *AE* (1950), no. 66 (Bruttius Praesens as *legatus*); *ILS,* no. 2726. See R. Syme, *Roman Papers* IV (1988), 306–307.

[19] *ILS,* no. 2727. See Schürer, *HJP* I, 429–434.

[20] *ILS,* no. 2723. See R. Saxer, *Untersuchungen zu der Vexillationen des römischen Kaiserheeres von Augustus bis Diokletian* (1967), 26.

[21] For the road itself and its milestones, D. H. French, *Roman Roads and Milestones of Asia Minor* I. *The Pilgrim's Road* (1981); see S. Mitchell, "The Balkans, Anatolia, and Roman Armies across Asia Minor", in S. Mitchell (ed.), *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (1983), 131.

[22] *IGR* III, no. 173 = *OGIS,* no. 544.

[23] Dio LXVIII, 17, 3.

If the Parthian war marks a notable step in the evolution of the Empire in the Near East, and a significant foretaste of future strategic commitments, the very fact that a reigning Emperor was now resident there for some three years was also important. First, there was the simple fact that it was possible; that the Empire was not such that it had to be ruled from Rome. Whatever an Emperor needed to do by way of the civilian government of the Empire could be done from his stopping-points on a journey, or in the intervals of campaigning.[29] But in so stark a form this too was a sign of the future rather than of established practice; not since Augustus, more than a century before, had any Emperor spent so long a continuous period in (or beyond) the provinces. What this meant for the Empire is perfectly expressed by Dio in recounting the consequences of the great earthquake which struck Antioch when Trajan was there in December 115:

[24] *IGLS* III, nos. 1155–1182.

[25] *P. Lond. inv.*, no. 229 = Cavenaille, *CPL*, no. 120.

[26] *AE* (1955), no. 225; for the prefect, Q. Marcius Turbo Fronto Publicius Severus, see *PIR*² M 249. For this interpretation, D. van Berchem, *Bonn. Jahrb.* 185 (1985), 47, esp. 77ff.

[27] 4.2 below.

[28] *ILS*, no. 9471; cf. L. Robert and J. Robert, *La Carie* II (1954), 180, no. 78.

[29] For this theme, Millar, *ERW*, passim.

> While he was staying in Antioch an extraordinary earthquake took place. Many cities suffered from it, but Antioch was the most unfortunate. For as Trajan was wintering there, and many soldiers had gathered there as well as many civilians, whether for judicial hearings or on embassies or as traders or out of curiosity, there was not a province or a community which remained unharmed, and thus in Antioch the whole world under the Romans suffered disaster.[30]

The slowly emerging role of Antioch as a secondary Imperial 'capital' is vividly captured. Trajan escaped on this occasion, to die of natural causes while sailing back from Syria along the Cilician coast in August 117. Whether he had intended it or not, the succession went to a son of his cousin, P. Aelius Hadrianus, well placed as *legatus* of Syria, who heard the news within days and proclaimed himself Emperor 'in Antioch, the metropolis of Syria'.[31] Setting off from there, and sending some forces before him, he took the land-route across Asia Minor, through Ancyra, Iuliopolis and Nicomedia, to the Balkans, arriving in Rome nearly a year after his proclamation, in July 118.[32]

His reign, as is well known, was to be unique in that so much of it was spent on systematic journeys through the provinces, with both civilian and military ends in view. But the military aspect arose largely not from the necessities of campaigns but from a desire to inspect the army. The fact that his journeys included the Near East is thus not distinctive in itself. What is distinctive is first the strongly local colouring of the documentary evidence which happens to reflect his presence there; then the second of the two great Jewish revolts, under Bar Kokhba or Ben Kosiba, in 132–135, against which the Emperor took command in person; and finally his foundation of the last 'real' *colonia* in the history of Rome, Aelia Capitolina, Jerusalem.

Hadrian may have been in Syria in 123, but the period when his visit left the clearest traces in our evidence seems to be from the autumn of 129 to the summer of 130. Much of any possible reconstruction depends on later sources and may be left aside. For instance the fact that there were 'Hadrianic Baths' in Antioch is now made certain by the new archive of the third century from the middle Euphrates.[33] But whether, as Malalas records in the sixth century, Hadrian ordered the construction of these baths himself, as well as of other

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30. Dio LXVIII, 24, 1–2.

31. Dio LXIX, 2, 1.

32. R. Halfmann, *Itinera Principum* (1986), 188ff. For refinements see R. Syme, "Journeys of Hadrian", *ZPE* 73 (1988), 159 = *Roman Papers* VI (1991), 346; T. D. Barnes, "Emperors on the Move", *JRA* 2 (1989), 247.

33. D. Feissel and J. Gascou, *CRAI* (1989), 535, no. 1: a subscription posted in 245, ἐν ταῖς Ἁδριαναῖς θερμαῖς. See further 4.2 below.

public buildings, or did so while present in person, is quite uncertain.[34] What matters is the very vivid documentary evidence of his presence in certain areas. Perhaps the most distinctive is the earliest documentary record of an Imperial visit to Palmyra, which in this reign gained the Greek title 'Hadrianē Palmyra'. It comes from a bilingual honorific inscription from the temple of Baʿalshamin recording that a man called Males had been secretary *(grammateus)* of the city during the visit of Hadrian, had provided oil for strangers and citizens and had seen to the reception of the troops. In the Palmyrene text Hadrian is 'our lord Hadrian, (the) god: [MR]N HDRY[N'] 'LH'.[35] The inscription dates the dedication of the statue of Males to 130/131, but does not of course serve to date the exact moment of the visit. Nonetheless it is highly significant that the Imperial entourage and escort troops did visit Palmyra at this time, when it was reaching the summit of its architectural development; on the other hand there is nothing whatsoever in the literature of the second century to suggest that the culture of Palmyra had been registered as something of particular interest to intellectual circles elsewhere in the Empire.

Probably on the same journey Hadrian also travelled south to the province of Arabia. A Greek inscription put up in his honour by Gerasa, 'the city of the Antiochenes by the Chrysorhoas, the former Gerasenes', seems to refer to the whole period of his stay, and to his having held jurisdiction while there, and dates to 130. It is matched by a Latin dedication on his behalf by some of his escort troops, his *equites singulares* who had wintered 'at Antiochia by the Chrysorhoas, also called Gerasa, sacred, inviolate and autonomous'. The triumphal arch which stands to the south of Gerasa was dedicated by the city on behalf of the Emperor at the same time, 130.[36] Here, too, no Emperor had ever been before. It is very likely that the Emperor did give jurisdiction while there, as Caracalla was later to do in Antioch.[37]

We would have known anyway that Hadrian visited Arabia, for contemporary coins record ADVENTUS AUG ARABIAE, as they do ADVENTUS AUG IUDAEAE. But precise connections between his presence, the plan to found a new *colonia* at Jerusalem, with a temple to Iuppiter Capitolinus, and the outbreak of the great revolt in 132 cannot be established. There is, however, no good reason to disbelieve the implications of Cassius Dio's account, according to which it was this plan, involving the settlement of a gentile population, which provoked rebellion (a reported ban on circumcision may also have been relevant). According to Dio, fighting did not break out while Hadrian was in Egypt or again in Syria, but only when he was far away.[38]

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[34] For his alleged constructions, some perhaps simply deduced from the fact that buildings were named after the Emperor (as was very common throughout the Empire), see Malalas, *Chron.*, 277–278.

[35] *CIS* II, no. 3959 = Cantineau, *Inv.* I, no. 2 = C. Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre* III: *Les inscriptions* (1971), no. 44.

[36] *Gerasa,* ins. no. 30 *(equites singulares);* 58 (arch); 144 (visit).

[37] 4.2 below.

Hadrian certainly visited Gaza in 130, was in Egypt over the winter of 130/131 and may have sailed up the Phoenician coast before spending the winter of 131/132 in Athens. So it is not unreasonable to regard the plan for a new *colonia,* with the title 'Colonia Aelia Capitolina', reflecting the name of the Emperor, P. Aelius Hadrianus, as a product of his personal initiative while there. Whether it was planned before that cannot be known. All that is clear is that Judaea was transferred from being a one-legion province, under a *legatus* of ex-praetor status, to being a two-legion province under an ex-consul, not after the revolt, as we might expect, but before it. If this change did not take place, as had been argued, under Trajan,[39] it had certainly occurred by the 120s, when first the legion II Traiana (before going to Egypt) and then, on a permanent basis, the VI Ferrata were stationed there.

At this point no details of the revolt itself are needed except to emphasise that it lasted some three and a half years, saw the foundation of a regular administration in the areas free of Roman control and again required a major concentration of force by the Roman army. The contemporary documents which reflect life in the Jewish-held area belong in the social history of Judaea; they strongly suggest that the revolt began in the spring of 132 and continued until the autumn of 135.[40] Even for the Roman army it is enough to recall that apart from X Fretensis and VI Ferrata, III Cyrenaica from Bostra and (at least) IV Gallica from Syria took part; as the consular *legatus* of Syria left the province to confront the uprising in Judaea, probably other units from Syria came too. Moreover, the tribune of a legion in Pannonia was appointed by Hadrian to bring detachments for the war.[41] More significant still, it can be taken as certain that the Emperor took command in person, at least for a time; inscriptions recording military honours now granted by the Emperor describe the campaign as an *expeditio Iudaica,* one on which the Emperor was present.[42] The revolt thus left Judaea as a major, and on the surface a highly Romanised, element in the structure of the Empire: two *coloniae,* Caesarea and Aelia; an ex-consul as governor with two legions each under a praetorian *legatus;* and a substantial number of auxiliaries. A *diploma* of 139 shows that there were then at least three cavalry *alae* and twelve *cohortes* in the province.[43] No other province with no external frontier had so large a garrison. But what the *diploma* of 139 also shows is that the name 'Iudaea', with its ethnic reference, had already disappeared, to be replaced by a new name, 'Syria Palaestina'.

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[38] Dio LXIX, 12, 1–2. The ban on circumcision is reported directly only by HA, *v. Had.* 14, 2, given more weight by the permission for it granted by Antoninus Pius, as recorded by Modestinus in *Dig.* XLVIII, 8, 11. See Schürer, *HJP* I, 534–543, and A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation* (1987), no. 1.

[39] W. Eck, "Zum konsularen Status von Iudaea im frühen 2. Jh.", *BASP* 21 (1984), 55.

[40] 10.3 below, and for a catalogue App. C.

[41] For the details see Schürer, *HJP* I, 547, n.150.

[42] So R. Syme, *ZPE* 73 (1988), 166–167 = *Roman Papers* VI (1991), 353–554.

With these changes the evolution of the structure of the Empire in the Near East west of the Euphrates was almost complete. If we look at it in very local terms, we can see that it consisted of a spread of major legionary bases: from Samosata (XVI Flavia Firma) and Zeugma (IV Scythica) in the north overlooking the Euphrates, to the Orontes Valley, where III Gallica seems to have been at Raphaneae, to Syria Palaestina, where X Fretensis was at Aelia and VI Ferrata at Caparcotna in the Jezreel Valley; and III Cyrenaica at Bostra in Arabia, where, as we have seen, the camp is still visible from the air, attached to the north side of the city. Even here we are hardly in a position to assess the complex mutual influences and relationships between the civilian population and these large masses of soldiers. Still less is this the case with auxiliary units, whose long-term locations, if they had them, are hardly ever known. One place where a few such sidelights are available, however, is Palmyra, where the earliest evidence for the presence of Roman auxiliary units belongs to the middle of the second century. Typically, what little we know is a product of the 'epigraphic habit', and specifically of the habit of putting up honorific inscriptions. So Greek inscriptions from the temple of Bel at Palmyra show us the *praefectus* of the Ala Herculiana of Thracians, Iulius Iulianus, in 167; and around the same period a different *praefectus,* Vibius Celer, who had also become a town-councillor *(bouleutēs)* of the city; he is described as 'the prefect of the *ala* (stationed) here', presumably the same one.[44]

How the different units of the army were distributed across the landscape, how they were housed and supplied and what functions they performed, for instance as a police-force, in relation to the civilian population are questions impossible to answer in general terms. There is no way in which the impact or presence of the Roman state in the Near East can be adequately assessed. Its more profound, longer-term effects, for instance the spread of the Roman citizenship or the transformation of collective identities (in what sense did any Commagenian or Nabataean identity survive the imposition of provincial status?) must be reserved for a closer look at the different sub-regions of the area. But it is still relevant to pick out, by way of illustration, a few features of the presence of the Roman state which we can discern from our scattered evidence.

One, which cannot have escaped anyone, was the construction of roads. Though a road might be anything from a fully paved construction, like the much-photographed section still visible between Antioch and Beroea, or a track from which stones had been systematically cleared, or just a track, milestones bearing the name of the Emperor, wherever they were placed, will have been an unmistakable sign of the Imperial presence. For instance, still clearly visible from the air and from the ground is the road linking Damascus to Bostra cut, in the middle of the second century, directly across the Leja, the plate of broken volcanic rock known as Trachonitis, once part of Herodian domains.[45] The road is lined with watch-towers and milestones, one of which records that in 185/186 the road was restored 'from Phaena to Aerita', that is, from the northern edge of the rock plate at Phaena (Mismiyeh) almost to the southern edge at Aerita (Ahire or Ariqah). Here a Greek inscription from above a surviving gate, dating to 169/170, perfectly exemplifies one form of interaction between Empire and subjects. For the gate was built at his own expense by a man from Aerita with a perfectly Roman name, T. Claudius Magnus, a veteran (*ouetranos,* transliterated), and the work was supervised by a centurion of III Gallica. The same centurion, as well as one from XVI Flavia Firma, appears engaged in building at Phaena.

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[43] *CIL* XVI, no. 87.

[44] Cantineau, *Inv.* IX, no. 22 (= *ILS,* no. 8869), no. 23.

Most of the inscriptions from Phaena come from a monumental construction, finally destroyed in 1890, which may have been a temple or some sort of official building.[46] Its most striking feature is a letter, engraved beside the main entrance, of Iulius Saturninus, *legatus* of Syria in 185–187:

> Iulius Saturninus to the Phaenesians, *mētrokōmia* of Trachōn, greeting. If anyone imposes himself on you by force, whether a soldier or a private person, send to me and you will have justice. For you do not owe any contribution to strangers, and having a guest-house you cannot be forced to receive strangers in your houses. Put up this letter of mine in a prominent place in your *mētrokōmia,* so that no one may be able to excuse himself on grounds of ignorance.[47]

This letter thus takes its place, along with the extract from the *mandata* of Domitian from Hama/Epiphania, in a long list of documents illuminating the most contentious area of friction between the state and its subjects. The use of a distinctive local term, *mētrokōmia* ('mother-village'), as well as the fact that the *legatus* addresses this community directly, also illustrates the city-like function of the major villages of this region. Whether the change was for good or ill, no one there could mistake the fact that since the disappearance of

[45] See M. Dunand, "La voie romaine du Ledgâ", *Mém. Ac. Ins.* 13 (1930), 521; Th. Bauzou, "Les voies de communications dans le Hauran à l'époque romaine", Dentzer, *Hauran* I, 137; Kennedy and Riley, *RDF,* 78–79.

[46] Le Bas-W., no. 2438 (Aerita); *IGR* III, nos. 1113–1118 (Phaena). See S. Hill, "The Praetorium at Musmiye", *DOP* 29 (1975), 349.

[47] Le Bas-W., no. 4551 = *IGR* III, no. 1119 = *OGIS,* no. 609.

Agrippa II some decades before, they belonged to a wider and quite different state-system.

As we have seen in the cases both of the colony of Babylonian Jews established in Batanaea by Herod the Great and of the villagers of Maoza when Nabataea became the province of Arabia, it would have been equally impossible to ignore the imposition of Roman taxation and the Roman census.[48] Yet, as elsewhere in the Empire, our documentation for the Near East hardly allows us to gain any conception of this process, or even to be sure whether direct taxation was paid predominantly in cash or in kind.[49] What we do know, or are told, about this in our sources manages to combine sweeping assertions with a lack of concrete detail. So, for instance, Appian, writing in the middle of the second century, mentions in passing that for 'Syrians' and 'Cilicians' there is an annual tax, at 1 percent of their census-rating.[50] That would imply a total valuation of landed property, as a basis for the payment; and it also implies a very high level of taxation. For if we suppose that land yielded 7 percent per year on its capital value, the rate of taxation would have been something like 15 percent on income. But the two known census-returns from Judaea show no trace of any such system—each piece of property has a conventional rate of taxation, in cash or kind, attached to it.[51] Nor do we gain any conception of how taxation of property related to taxation of individuals, the 'head-tax', or *tributum capitis.* So the most important of the Roman lawyers of the early third century, Ulpian, a citizen of Tyre, writes of the *census:* 'It is necessary to record a person's age in the census-return, because certain groups gain exemption by reason of age; for example in Syria males are liable to the *tributum capitis* from 14 years, females from 12, until the 65th year'. We have to assume that both a land tax *(tributum soli)* and a 'head-tax' were payable. For the jurist Paulus, a contemporary of Ulpian, notes that when Vespasian made Caesarea a *colonia,* he remitted only the *tributum capitis;* but his son Titus exempted their land *(solum)* also.[52] Babatha, making her census-return in the province of Arabia in 127, makes no reference to her own age, however, or to anyone else as being resident on the properties concerned.[53]

In other words the realities of the process by which the Roman state lived off its subjects, in this as in other areas, escape us. Almost equally fragmentary evidence survives for the collection of tolls *(portoria)* by contractors *(publicani)* on the main routes. The complex question of long-distance trade will concern us later;[54] so it is sufficient here to mention the collection of tolls at Gaza on the caravan-trade coming up from the Yemen (Arabia Felix), and the 'quarter-collector' *(tetartōnes),* attested (again) on an honorific Greek and Palmyrene inscription from the agora at Palmyra put up in 161. The honorand, Marcus Aemilius Marcianus Asclepiades, was a town-councillor of Antioch, and was honoured by 'the traders who had come up from Spasinou Charax' at the head of the Persian Gulf. It is accompanied by another, of 174, which honours another *tetartōnes,* and is one of the very few known trilingual inscriptions, in Latin, Greek and Palmyrene—brief as it is, a perfect expression of the complex cultural framework created by the extension of Roman power into the steppe.[55] A quite different perspective is offered by a scene in Philostratus' historical novel the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana,* written in the early third century: when Apollonius and his party are about to cross the Euphrates into Mesopotamia, the *telōnēs (publicanus)* stationed at Zeugma takes them to a board on which standard charges for various items are listed.[56]

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[48] 2.2 and 3.2.

[49] See 2.2.

[50] Appian, *Syr.* 50/253.

[51] 3.2 above.

[52] *Dig.* L, 15, 3 *pr.* (Ulpian); L, 15, 8, 7 (Paulus).

[53] 3.2 above.

This work, set in the later first century, properly takes no account of the great changes and upheavals which occurred in the later second century and early third. These events were to give Syria a new and unexpected centrality in the functioning of the Empire, and to extend Roman rule both far down the middle Euphrates and across northern Mesopotamia to the Tigris.

3.4. EMPERORS AND PRETENDERS IN THE NEAR EAST FROM LUCIUS VERUS TO SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS: THE CONQUEST OF MESOPOTAMIA

For a quarter of a century after the end of the Bar Kochba revolt, no significant changes took place in the shape of the Empire in the Near East. When they did come, it was again the result, so our Roman sources relate, of Parthian ambitions:[1] for Vologaeses IV of Parthia, taking advantage of the accession in 161 of two new joint Emperors, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, installed Pacorus, a member of his family, as king of Armenia. The early fighting took place on the upper Euphrates and involved the defeat and suicide of the *legatus* of Cappadocia. The subsequent Roman reaction was of great significance for the nature of the Imperial system for centuries to come. One Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, stayed in Rome, while the other, Lucius Verus, travelled (slowly and luxuriously, it was said) to Antioch to conduct the campaign, apparently arriving in 162 or 163. In the event, when the Romans took the initiative, first in 163 and then decisively in 165, it proved possible to place a Roman nominee on the throne of Armenia and to march all the way to the centre of the Parthian Empire, capture Ctesiphon and sack the major Greek city of Seleucia on the Tigris.

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[54] 13.1 below.

[55] Cantineau, *Inv.* X, nos. 29 and 113. A further trilingual inscription referring to the same man is published by Kh. Al-As'ad and J. Teixidor, *Syria* 62 (1985), 279, no. 9.

[56] Philostratus, *V. Ap.* I, 20.

[1] For a detailed and perceptive account of these events, on which I draw for those details relevant to the Near East in the sense used here, see A. Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography*² (1987), 121–126; 128–131. On Vologaeses (IV), see now A. Pennachietti, "L'iscrizione bilingue greco-partica dell'Eracle di Seleucia", *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987), 169, on pp. 181–182.

As such, these campaigns are perhaps most significant for having been the subject of a satire by a native of Samosata with the Hellenised Latin name of Loukianos, or Lucian, whose *How History Should Be Written* mocks panegyrical and ill-informed contemporary accounts. What it meant that a major Greek writer should come from the ancient capital of Commagene must be discussed later.[2] But his contemptuous analysis of the instant histories produced to celebrate the event, written already in 166, is enough to confirm the facts of fighting in northern Mesopotamia, around Edessa and Nisibis, as well as the currency of fantastic reports of how the third legion (III Gallica) and some auxiliaries, under 'Cassius', had even crossed the Indus.[3] Documentary evidence shows movements not much less remarkable than that: one legion was moved from Bonn and came with other detachments through the Orient to Osrhoene and Anthemousia, and another from the lower Danube.[4] In fact the river which Avidius Cassius, the *legatus* of III Gallica, will have crossed will have been the Tigris; and it will have been his advance into Media which earned Lucius Verus the title 'Medicus'. But the image of Alexander was not an unreal or insignificant element in Roman thinking about military glory in the East.

What if anything really changed as a result of the Mesopotamian campaign is quite unclear. What seems certain at least is that the king, Mannus, of Osrhoene took the Roman side and was temporarily exiled to Roman territory. For two years as it seems (approximately 162/163–164/165), a Parthian-backed king ruled there. The coinage of Edessa in fact begins with issues showing Vologaeses IV on the obverse and 'Wael the king', named in Syriac (W'L MLK'), on the reverse. But then there came issues either with 'Ma'nu the king' in Syriac (M'NW MLK') or with members of the Antonine dynasty on the obverse, and 'King Mannos, friend of Romans' *(Basileus Mannos Philorōmaios),* on the reverse. The coins, very remarkably, fit exactly with the report by an eighth-century Syriac chronicler—admittedly placing these events more than two decades earlier—that a king Ma'nu ruled for twelve years after being in exile in Roman territory for two.[5]

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[2] See H. Homeyer, *Lukian, Wie man Geschichte schreiben soll* (1965); C. P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (1986), esp. ch. 6. See 12.3 below.

[3] Lucian, *Hist.* 15 (Nisibis); 22 (Edessa); 31 (Indus).

[4] Birley, op. cit. (n.1), 130; *ILS,* no. 1098; *CIL* III, no. 6169.

Rome had thus, after an interval of more than half a century, acquired another dependent kingdom, and one of considerable importance in cultural and religious history. Whether any of Mesopotamia was now actually occupied by Roman soldiers remains uncertain. Certainly such an occupation took place to the north, in Armenia, where a Roman nominee, Sohaemus, was installed as king, and Roman forces were left at a newly named capital, Kainepolis ('new city'). Two Latin inscriptions duly attest detachments of the Cappadocian legions stationed at Echmiadzin just south of Mount Ararat.[6] If this is indeed Kainepolis (or even if not), it represents a remarkably deep penetration of Armenia, for it lies the best part of 400 km east of Satala. Over mountainous territory this must have meant a march of twenty days or more. In the light of that remarkable example of imperialism, it may seem less improbable that garrisons, or outposts, were also left in eastern Mesopotamia, at Nisibis. But our only evidence to suggest that possibility is that in the 190s troops loyal to the *legatus* of Syria, Pescennius Niger, were besieged there by the Adiabenians (to the east) and the Osrhoenians (to the west).[7] If there was a Roman protectorate of Mesopotamia, we do not know what form it took; certainly there is no reason to think of a dependent king having been supported at Nisibis.

If the situation in that area remains obscure, a considerable advance down the Euphrates is quite certain. Lucian refers to a battle near Sura on the Euphrates, which may have been the point at which Roman control had previously stopped.[8] Another contemporary, Fronto, writing to Verus about the glory won by his campaigns, refers to the storming not only of Artaxata (in Armenia) but of Dausara and Nicephorium.[9] He does not need to say that these were on the Euphrates, that Dausara in fact lay upstream from Sura or that Nicephorium (also called Callinicum) lay at the confluence of the Balikh and the Euphrates. More important still, however, Lucian speaks several times of a great battle at Europos, in which one panegyrical historian claimed that over seventy thousand men had been killed. Another thought that Europos was in Mesopotamia.[10] But even Lucian does not make clear that this meant a great extension of Roman control down the river (over 250 km as the river runs), and above all that it took Roman occupation southwards past the confluence of the Euphrates and the Chabur at Circesium, which would later be heavily fortified by Diocletian.[11]

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[5] See further 12.5 below, and App. B.

[6] *ILS*, nos. 394 and 9117. See M. G. Angeli Bertinelli, "I romani oltre l'Euphrate nel II secolo d.C.", *ANRW* II.9 (1976), 3, on p. 27.

[7] Dio LXXV, 1, 2–3.

[8] Lucian, *Hist.* 29. See 3.1 above.

[9] Fronto, *Ad Verum Imp.* 2, 1 (Loeb ed. II, 132).

[10] Lucian, *Hist.* 20, 24, 28.

The Romans had thus regained what may have been the key element in the 'frontier' of Trajan's short-lived province of Mesopotamia;[12] and if there were now some sort of occupation of Mesopotamia, the route following the Chabur up to the region of Nisibis may have been important. But both the line of the Euphrates and that of the Chabur were in any case routes, narrow strips of cultivated territory, rather than frontiers.

In terms of area, even as regards the zone to the west of the Euphrates, this substantial advance thus added less to Roman territory than a map conceived in terms of regions bounded by 'frontiers' might suggest. It did have the quite accidental effect of transforming the volume and nature of what we now can hope to understand of the Near East under Roman rule. For, first, as we will see in more detail later, the newly available archive of documents dating between the 230s and 250s relates primarily to the life of the villages on the west side of the Euphrates between the Balikh and just below the Chabur, a region of whose culture and social life virtually nothing was previously known.[13] Second, what has been known of it, or of areas near it, has until recently depended on the vast mass of evidence of all kinds revealed by the excavations of Dura-Europos in the 1920s and 1930s.[14] This small Macedonian settlement on its spur overlooking the Euphrates had been in Parthian occupation since the later second century BC and was to remain in Roman hands from the 160s until its destruction by the Persians in the 250s. Because the archaeological and documentary evidence from here is wholly out of proportion to that from anywhere else; because it was for so long 'Parthian'; and because the evidence was heavily over-interpreted when first found and has not all been published in final form even yet, Dura presents the most acute problems for any overall interpretation of the 'Roman' Near East. For the moment, however, what concerns us is the presence of the Roman army there, and only in its first phase, until the major changes of the 190s.

The Roman military presence is illuminated by a considerable range of documents, both inscribed and perishable (parchments and papyri), though none of the latter belong to this first phase.[15] A considerable series of Palmyrene inscriptions from Dura (the first dating to 34/33 BC and hence almost the earliest known) shows that there had been close connections across the steppe throughout the period; and it may just be that a military role on the part of the Palmyrenes persisted from the Parthian to the early Roman period. At any rate one Palmyrene dedication to Yarhibol from the Parthian period was made by the 'Bne Mita, the archers' (BNY MYT' QŠṬ')—which does not, however, have to imply a regular military presence.[16] Such a presence *is* clearly implied by a Palmyrene inscription of 168/169 made by an 'officer' (the Greek word *stratēgos,* transliterated as 'SṬRṬG'), 'who is in command of the archers who are at Dura' (DY 'L QŠṬ' DY BDWR'), as well as a second inscription in Greek, of 170/171, naming a Palmyrene as '*stratēgos* of the archers'.[17] No other evidence of a Palmyrene military presence reappears until 208, when the unit concerned was a regular Roman auxiliary cohort;[18] speculation on this early phase can be taken no further. At least by the reign of Commodus (180–192) an auxiliary unit from the garrison of Syria, the Cohors II Ulpia Equitata, which had been involved in operations in Mesopotamia in Verus' Parthian war,[19] had moved to Dura. Very typically, in various ways, the evidence comes from an altar dedicated in Latin to the Genius of Dura by two *decuriones* of the cohort, for the safety of Commodus.[20] The *cohors* was still there in 194, at a time of civil war and considerable changes, when an *actuarius* of the cohort was, in all apparent innocence, involved in putting up a dedication 'for the safety and victory' of Emperor Septimius Severus and his fellow-consul of the year (and later defeated rival), Clodius Albinus.[21]

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[11] 5.1 below.

[12] 3.3 above.

[13] For this archive, ch. 1 above, and 4.2 and 12.5 below.

[14] See, as a preliminary, C. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos* (1979).

[15] For all that follows see J. F. Gilliam, "The Roman Army in Dura", in C. B. Welles, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report* V.1, *The Parchments and Papyri* (1959), introduction, ch. 4, reprinted in J. F. Gilliam, *Roman Army Papers* (1986), 207.

How this inscription relates to the rise and fall of the other rival Emperor of that year, Pescennius Niger, the *legatus* of Syria itself, is quite unclear. But before that we need to put in context various aspects of these decades, which clearly illustrate the growing importance of the Near East within the Imperial military and political system.

The first focus of attention must be the personality and career of C. Avidius Cassius, whom we have seen as *legatus* of III Gallica winning glory in Verus' Parthian war.[22] On the surface his background and very prominent career now present few problems. He came from Cyrrhus in northern Syria and was the son of a well-known orator, Avidius Heliodorus, who was *ab epistulis* (in charge of letters—almost certainly Greek letters) of Hadrian, and later prefect of Egypt. Since, when he proclaimed himself Emperor in 175, Avidius Cassius was to refer to Alexandria as his 'paternal city', he was almost certainly born there while his father was in the entourage of Hadrian. He himself will then have entered the Senate in the mid-150s, and would (as was normal) have been an ex-praetor when he commanded III Gallica in Verus' campaign.

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[16] *Dura Reports* VII/VIII, 279, no. 909 = du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions palmyréniennes de Dura-Europos (32 avant J.-C. à 256 après J.-C.)* (1939), no. 33.

[17] *Dura Reports* VII/VIII, 83–84, nos. 845–846. The Palmyrene one is Mesnil du Buisson, op. cit. (n.16), no. 19.

[18] 4.1 below.

[19] *ILS,* no. 2724; see Devijver, *PME* V 17 (M. Valerius Lollianus).

[20] *Dura Reports* I, 42–44.

[21] *Dura Reports* V, 226, no. 561.

[22] See M. L. Astarita, *Avidio Cassio* (1983), and above all R. Syme, "Avidius Cassius: His Rank, Age and Quality", *Bonner Historia-Augusta Colloquium 1984/1985* (1987), 207 = *Roman Papers* V (1986), 689.

So far what we see is an example of the classic pattern of the integration of the Greek upper classes into the highest orders of the Roman system. First the Roman citizenship; then a career, by the father, in equestrian posts, gaining advantage also from a reputation for rhetorical skills; then the son enters the Senate. This pattern, with many variations, has been much studied and needs no comment.[23] But it is much less well attested for the Near East than for Anatolia, especially if we leave out the direct descendants of kings on the one hand, and citizens of Roman *coloniae* on the other.[24] Even if this disparity is a product of a comparable disparity in the number of inscriptions set up in the cities of the two regions, a Roman senator from Cyrrhus, beginning his career in the middle of the second century, remains a noteworthy phenomenon.

What followed his success in the Parthian war was more noteworthy still: a suffect consulship, perhaps already in 166, and held in absence; and then very soon, perhaps even immediately, the consular post of *legatus* of Syria. A long series of inscriptions, including those from Phaena and Aerita already mentioned, reflect his role there between 169 and 175. All describe him in the normal terminology, *legatus Augusti pro praetore,* or in Greek, *lamprotatos hypatikos* (translating *clarissimus consularis*).[25] But two Greek writers of the first half of the third century, Cassius Dio and Philostratus, both state that he was given also some general command, either of 'all of Asia' or of 'the East'.[26] Apart from an expedition to crush a rebellion in Egypt, there is no precise sense which we can attach to this.

In 175, when it was thought that Marcus Aurelius, now sole Emperor, and with only the thirteen-year-old Commodus left to succeed him, had died, Avidius Cassius proclaimed himself Emperor; Cassius Dio believed that Marcus' wife Faustina encouraged him to do so. In the event, little is known of the three-month 'reign' of Avidius except that he gained the allegiance of the Near East and Egypt. It ended with his murder, while Marcus was still on the Pannonian front. But although the *legatus* of Cappadocia took immediate control of Syria, Marcus still came in person, making peace with the barbarian tribes beyond the Danube, some of whom now supplied troops. Many aspects of the Empire as it was developing are reflected in the honorific inscription of an equestrian officer from Pannonia who at this moment was 'placed in charge of cavalrymen of the peoples of the Marcomanni, Naristae and Quadi on their way to the punishment of the eastern uprising'.[27] Marcus, as we would expect, took the established land-route through Asia Minor to the Cilician Gates. But no contemporary evidence, literary or documentary, reflects Marcus' presence in the Near East. According to the late biography of him in the *Historia Augusta,* he passed directly on to Alexandria, where he seems to have spent the winter of 175/176, and visited Antioch only on his return journey. But he perhaps visited Syria in 175 and went by land from there to Egypt. For Ammianus records him on a journey through Palestine complaining of the turbulence of the Jews: 'O Marcomanni, O Quadi, O Sarmatae, at last I have found others more restless than you!'. In the immediate context the remark is, in a certain limited sense, intelligible. Whether any of the barbarian soldiers accompanying him overheard it is not recorded. Nor do we know what disturbances among the Jewish population of Syria Palaestina, three decades after the end of the Bar Kochba war, prompted this exclamation—or why it had been in his account of Marcus' reign that Ammianus, in a lost book, had first given an account of the *Saraceni.*[28]

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[23] The classic presentation is still A. Stein, "Zur sozialen Stellung der provinzialen Oberpriester", *Epitumbion Swoboda* (1927), 311. See now, for all the evidence, H. Halfmann, *Die Senatoren aus dem östlichen Teil des Imperium Romanum* (1979).

[24] See G. W. Bowersock, "Roman Senators from the Near East: Syria, Judaea, Arabia, Mesopotamia", in S. Panciera (ed.), *Epigrafia e ordine senatorio* II (1982), 651.

[25] For the full references, B. E. Thomasson, *Laterculi Praesidum* I (1984), 312–313. In *AE* (1937), no. 167 = C. Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre* III, *Les inscriptions* (1971), no. 48a, παρὰ 'Αουίδιῳ Κασσίῳ τῷ διασημοτάτῳ ὑπά[ρχ]ῳ; the last word should be ὑπα[τικ]ῷ.

[26] Dio LXXX1, 3, 1: τῆς 'Ασίας ἁπάσης ἐπιτροπεύειν. Philostratus, *V. Soph*. II, 1, 32: ὁ τὴν ἑῳαν ἐπιτροπεύων.

Whether, as the *Historia Augusta* claims, Marcus really prohibited all shows and public meetings at Antioch as a punishment, and whether, as Malalas might suggest, there was a restoration of the games at Antioch under Commodus, need not be decided.[29] But the episode must have served to emphasise the potential role of Antioch as a secondary capital city, and with that the relationship between the *legatus,* or self-proclaimed Emperor, and the population of the main city of his province. Furthermore, it does also seem to have raised a wider question of regional identities and regional loyalties. For Cassius Dio, a Greek from Bithynia, who entered the Senate in the late 180s, both describes Avidius Cassius as 'a Syrian, from Cyrrhus' and includes in his *History* a speech of Marcus Aurelius, addressed to his soldiers, in which he derides the forces under Cassius as being 'Cilicians, Syrians, Jews and Egyptians'. More significant, Dio records that it was then laid down that no one should govern the province from which he himself came.[30] If 'Syrian' means simply 'inhabitant of the Roman province of Syria', there is no problem, though there is very little to suggest that in the Empire a person's province served as a sort of ethnicity. We would far more naturally suppose that it was a person's city or community which did that. Moreover, in what sense an inhabitant of a Greek city in Syria, and a Roman senator, would have accepted a description of himself as a 'Syrian' is a major problem. So is the implication of Marcus' measure, that such an origin would have attracted a degree of regional loyalty throughout the province.

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[27] *AE* (1956), no. 124; Pflaum, *Carrières,* no. 181 *bis.*

[28] Ammianus XXII, 5, 4–5 = Stern, *GLAJJ* II, no. 506 (Jews); XIV, 4, 2 (Saracens).

[29] HA, *M. Ant.* 25, 9–17; Malalas, *Chron.* 283–290.

Such regional loyalties proved in any case not to be a necessary condition for a *legatus* of Syria to proclaim himself Emperor, or to attract widespread support. For within two decades such a proclamation was made, in 193, by Pescennius Niger, *legatus* since 190 or 191. The civil war which followed and Pescennius' defeat by Septimius Severus, Emperor in 193–211, were to have fundamental consequences for the Near East—and ones whose origins, nature and effects themselves raise difficult questions of how communal and regional identities were understood then or should be analyzed now. In this instance the whole shape of the region and of the Roman presence in it was transformed by external and civil wars, and by decisions made by an individual monarch whose relations to that region were of the most complex kind. Certain aspects of Severus' biography are therefore essential to note if these changes are to be understood.[31]

Severus had been born in 145 at Lepcis Magna in Tripolitania, now (since 112) a Roman *colonia,* but as a city a distant product of the Phoenician colonisation of North Africa, and still a region where a Semitic language (Neo-Punic) was current alongside Latin. That the Phoenician origins of Lepcis are relevant to the reshaping of the Near East is no mere novelistic fantasy. For perfectly clear documentary evidence from this period shows that the historic role of Tyre in Phoenicia as the 'mother-city' of Lepcis was still publicly celebrated. Precisely this is reflected in a second-century dedication, in Latin and Greek, put up in Tyre by the *colonia* of Lepcis and honouring Tyre as its *mētropolis.*[32] Severus, coming from a prominent local family including Roman senators, entered the Senate himself, and in about 180, as an ex-praetor, was sent to Syria as *legatus* of the legion IV Scythica at Zeugma. For anyone who has looked across the Euphrates from the acropolis of Zeugma to the rolling, fertile territory on the other bank, it is hard to reject altogether a connection between this appointment and Severus' later claim that Mesopotamia, now conquered, would serve as a bulwark for Syria. In fact we know nothing of any military or other role of Severus at this time. It was only later recorded that before becoming Emperor, he had consulted the oracle of Bel at Apamea on the Orontes (evidently while *legatus*), and had received in reply two lines of the *Iliad* describing Agamemnon. The appearance in this major Greek city of a god with a Babylonian name is another puzzle, to which we will return.[33] But for the moment, if we may believe the biography of Severus in the *Historia Augusta,* it was another aspect of divine agency, a horoscope, which a few years later, while he was *legatus* of Lugdunensis, persuaded him to marry a lady from Emesa, Iulia Domna.[34]

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[30] Dio LXXI, 22, 2: Σύρος μὲν ἐκ τῆς Κύρου ἦν; 24–26 (Marcus' speech); 31, 1.

[31] As will be obvious, what follows depends on A. Birley, *The African Emperor: Septimius Severus* (1988).

[32] See J. P. Rey-Coquais, "Une double dédicace de Lepcis Magna à Tyr", in A. Mastino (ed.), *L'Africa Romana* IV (1986), 597, and Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 35–36. *AE* (1987), nos. 958–959.

Whether the story was fiction or not, the marriage is a fact. On the surface at least, it could be seen as a marriage-connection typical among the provincial aristocracies who had risen into the higher ranks of the Imperial service. Whether Iulia Domna's family had any connection with the dynasty of Emesa which had come to an end, apparently, in the 70s is pure speculation. It may equally be speculation when a fourth-century source records that the father of Iulia Domna and her sister Iulia Maesa was Bassianus, priest of the Sun, 'whom the Phoenicians, from whom he sprang, called Heliogabalus'.[35] That description masks profound problems, as will be seen later. If there is truth in the report, Bassianus must, from the names of his daughters, have been a Roman citizen, Iulius Bassianus; and the family's citizenship must indeed have gone back to the early first century AD. Iulia Domna's sister, Iulia Maesa, married an *eques* who later rose to the Senate, the Iulius Avitus Alexianus from Emesa who as *legatus* of Raetia about 200 was to dedicate an altar to 'his ancestral Sun God Elagabal'.[36] By 193 he will have been settled in his equestrian career, and it was probably Severus who made him a senator. Their daughter Iulia Sohaemias, perhaps born in the early 180s, will have been married around 200 to Sextus Varius Marcellus, an equestrian official who, as we learn from Cassius Dio, was from the same province (the undivided 'Syria' of before 194), being from Apamea. It is Dio too who goes on to say that Maesa's other daughter, Iulia Avita Mamaea, was married to Gessius Marcianus, also 'a Syrian', from Arca (also called Caesarea ad Libanum), an equestrian *procurator*.[37]

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[33] Dio LXXVIII, 8, 5–6. See 7.4 below.

[34] HA, *v. Sept. Sev.* 3, 6.

[35] *Epit. de Caes.* 21, 1; 23, 2.

[36] *PIR*² I 192. For the identification see H.-G. Pflaum, "La carrière de C. Iulius Avitus Alexianus, grand'père de deux empereurs", *REL* 57 (1979), 298; H. Halfmann, "Zwei syrische Verwandte des severischen Kaiserhauses", *Chiron* 12 (1982), 212. For the whole family nexus, Birley, op. cit., App. 2. The family is also treated, in the context of the history of Emesa, in 9.2 below.

The sons of these two marriages, born in about 203 and 209, were to be the youthful Emperors of 218–222, M. Aurelius Antoninus, or 'Elagabal', and of 222–235, Severus Alexander. In itself it must be an open question as to whether these provincial, or regional, connections had any significance. But the fact that a prominent contemporary, Dio, stresses them cannot be ignored. The integration of these products of Syrian cities into the equestrian service would be of some significance even without the accession of Severus in 193, and the further promotions to the Senate which followed.

The murder of Commodus on the last night of 192 led to the brief regimes in Rome of Helvius Pertinax and then Didius Julianus, ended by the entry of Septimius Severus' troops from Pannonia Superior, where he had been *legatus*. But even before he began his march, in April 193, he may have heard that Pescennius Niger had proclaimed himself Emperor in Antioch. Herodian's *History*, written towards the middle of the third century, provides a model of how such a proclamation, made in a major Greek city, would take place.[38] Niger began by summoning some officers and getting them to spread the rumour of a possible proclamation. Popular response soon followed:

> Syrians, being characteristically erratic people, are always ready to upset established rule. But they also had a real affection for Niger because he had been a mild governor to everyone, and frequently used to join in the celebration of their festivals. The Syrians are naturally fond of holidays, which applies particularly to the citizens of Antioch, the largest and most flourishing city. In Antioch they celebrate festivals practically the whole year round, either in the city or in the surrounding district. Because Niger had given them a succession of shows (about which they are particularly enthusiastic), and had granted them licence to have feasts and celebrations, which he knew were popular, he was obviously respected.

He is then represented as making a speech to the soldiers, with a civilian crowd also present:

> After such a speech the entire army and the assembled crowd at once proclaimed him emperor and hailed him with the title of Augustus. They also put the purple cloak of an emperor on him and provided him with all the other tokens of imperial dignity made out of makeshift materials, including the carrying of fire before him in processions. After conducting him to the temples of Antioch they installed him ceremoniously in his own house,

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[37] Dio LXXVIII, 30, 2–3.

[38] Herodian II, 7, 7–8, 6, Loeb trans.

> which was now regarded as the imperial court and no longer a private house. Outside it was decorated with all the insignia of office.

Embassies then came from all the neighbouring provinces, as well as messages from 'satraps' and kings beyond the Euphrates and Tigris.

In 193/194, however, Severus' forces marched east, while Niger remained inactive; both the forces and the Emperor himself, following later, took the established route through Asia Minor, and by 194 Severus was in control of Syria. In 195 he was campaigning in Mesopotamia (where there may already have been some Roman forces),[39] marching back through Asia Minor in early 196. After the defeat of another rival Emperor, Clodius Albinus, the *legatus* of Britain, he set off in summer 197 to Syria (this time via Brundisium), and invaded Parthia in 197/198, capturing Ctesiphon (perhaps in January 198). In the rest of 198 he seems to have been in Syria; and then, apparently in 199, there came a further expedition, during which he failed to take Hatra. After that he returned, and travelled through Syria Palaestina to Egypt. How long he stayed there is uncertain; but he then returned to Syria, where he and his son (now called M. Aurelius Antoninus, better known by his nickname Caracalla) entered on the consulate of 202 in Antioch. After that they marched back by the normal route across Asia Minor, passing through Ancyra and Nicaea.[40]

The details of these movements are important. For, first, the government of the Empire could be and was conducted by and from the Emperor's travelling entourage. Second, the sheer stretch of time involved is a sign of how the Empire was evolving. When Severus celebrated the beginning of the tenth year of his reign in Rome in 202, he had spent at least half of it either in Syria or on campaigns across the Euphrates. Third, to enter on a joint consulate in Antioch was deliberately to emphasise that the institutions of the Roman *res publica* could be deployed in the East. Within two decades, two different pretenders and two established Emperors had, for varying periods, ruled from there. And fourth, it was in the 190s, in the aftermath of the civil war, that major changes took place in the Near East, both internally in the shape of the provinces and externally in the level of military commitment.

The first step was to divide the province of Syria into two; looking back, Herodian was later to emphasise that Pescennius Niger had governed the whole of Syria, a vast province covering Phoenicia and all the territory up to the Euphrates.[41] That was of course the point; looked at from Rome, it was too large. So the region now became two provinces: the northern half, with two legions, became (against all previous usage) 'Syria Coele', or 'Hollow

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[39] 3.3 above.

[40] See Halfmann, *Itinera,* 216–221, and T. D. Barnes, *JRA* 2 (1989), 255–256.

[41] Herodian II, 7, 4.

Syria';[42] the southern part, with one legion, was to be 'Syria Phoenice'. Latin inscriptions leave no doubt that this (not 'Phoenicia') was its title; but 'Phoenice' (like 'Coele' indeed) is not a normal Latin adjective, but a straight transliteration from Greek. As such, it is even declined as in Greek. So milestones from the road through Trachonitis, mentioned above, record their establishment by Manilius Fuscus, the first *legatus,* described as 'praesidem Syriae Phoenices'.[43] The use of this term can have been intended only as a historical reminiscence, emphasising the importance of the cities of Phoenicia.

This newly devised province was not confined to areas which anyone would previously have thought of as 'Phoenician', for the 'border' between it and Syria Coele ran all the way from the Mediterranean across to the Euphrates. On the coast the city of Arados and its territory belonged to Syria Phoenice; so did Raphaneae, the camp of III Gallica, Emesa and its territory, Damascus and Palmyra, with its vast zone stretching to the Euphrates. But Dura-Europos, as abundant evidence shows, belonged to Syria Coele. In spite of the conquest of northern Mesopotamia, the (now) two legions of Syria Coele seem to have remained where they had been before, on the Euphrates at Samosata and at Zeugma;[44] if so, they now faced provincial territory across the Euphrates and were over 300 km from the southernmost part of the province where it reached the river.

The reason for the division can be regarded as certain, namely to limit the forces available to any one *legatus* in the Near East to not more than two legions. The *legati* of Syria Coele, with their two remaining legions, were still of ex-consul rank, while those of Phoenice were of ex-praetor status, as commanding only one legion; that it remained at Raphaneae in the Orontes Valley, not far from Emesa, is made quite clear by events in the civil war of 218.[45] In what sense if at all Syria Phoenice should be thought of as a *frontier* province remains to be seen when we look at the evidence for the Severan frontier as a whole. But certainly many aspects of security remained in the hands of the Palmyrenes, whose role in the protection of caravans going across the steppe to the Euphrates is best attested in this period. That fact, and the relation of Palmyra to the early governors of the new province (whom they still flatteringly called *hypatikoi—consulares*), is clearly reflected in a bilingual Palmyrene inscription of 198 in honour of one Aelius Bora, 'placed in charge of keeping the peace by the *hypatikoi* Manilius Fuscus (194–197?) and Venidius Rufus (198?) and by his native city, and having shown great determination and courage and having acted as *stratēgos* several times and having retained the same courage and manhood, and having been honoured for these qualities by Iarhibol the ancestral god, and by the governors and by the decrees of his native city'. What this meant is made more explicit by a decree of the following year, 199, honouring someone else 'who by his continued commands against the nomads had come to the aid of the merchants and afforded safety to the caravans *(synodiai)*'.[46]

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[42] On this see the typically brilliant article by E. Bickerman, "La Coelé-Syrie: Notes de géographie historique", *RB* 54 (1947), 256. The term had been used, very inconsistently, for various regions in *southern* Syria, including the Bekaa Valley and the Decapolis. See also M. Sartre, "La Syrie Creuse n'existe pas", *Géog. hist.,* 15.

[43] M. Dunand, "La voie romaine du Ledjâ", *Mém. Acad. Ins.* 2 (1930), 1, on pp. 22–37.

[44] So Wagner, *RET,* 65; but cf. 4.1 below.

[45] 4.2 below.

If our evidence were better, we might well think that the most significant feature of Phoenice as a province, perhaps even as a military command, was the two great mountain-chains of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon with Mount Hermon, which occupied a large proportion of its western part. The proportion may have been made even greater in the early third century by the loss of some territory in the Hauran and Trachonitis to Arabia, for unknown reasons and with not very clear consequences, except that Canatha and other small places now fell within the area of activity of the legion III Cyrenaica stationed at Bostra.[47]

The fact of the creation of a new province has naturally led historians on the vain search for its 'capital' (Tyre, Sidon, Damascus?) and the seat of its governor. That is a misapplied question. But, by contrast, what is very well attested are the drastic changes imposed by Severus by way of reward and punishment for the different attitudes taken by cities in the civil war.[48] Herodian records that while Antioch, as we have seen, supported Pescennius Niger, Laodicea on the coast supported Severus, and was sacked by Niger's forces; similarly Berytus supported Niger, and Tyre Severus, and Tyre was also sacked by Niger's troops. Herodian then claims that after Severus' victory Antioch lost the formal status of a city altogether, and became a village *(kōmē)* in the territory of Laodicea—which if true lasted only a few years.[49] What is certain, and very well attested in various types of evidence, is that the Greek title 'metropolis' ('mother-city') and the Roman status of *colonia* were liberally distributed by the Emperor. The clearest case is Laodicea, which became a metropolis immediately in 194, and a *colonia* with *ius Italicum* in 198—'on account of its services in the civil war', as the contemporary Roman jurist Ulpian, a native of Tyre, records. He is not so explicit about his own city, preferring to speak in general terms of its loyalty to the Roman state; but it certainly was for that reason that Tyre appeared on its now Latin coinage from Severus' reign as 'Septimia Turus Metropolis Colonia'. Ulpian felt no equal reserves about the case of Heliopolis, which since 15 BC had been part of the territory of the *colonia* of Berytus. Now, 'on the occasion of the civil war', it gained the rank of *colonia,* becoming the 'Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Heliopolis'. This island of Romanness and the Latin language in the Near East thus became two independent cities, a punishment (as is clear) for Berytus' support of Niger. No such explanation is available for Severus' other grant of this status, to Sebaste (Samaria), founded by Herod the Great—unless we use the item offered by the *Historia Augusta,* that the people of Flavia Neapolis, the neighbouring city, had also displeased him by taking Niger's side, and lost their status.[50]

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[46] H. Ingholt, "Deux inscriptions bilingues de Palmyre", *Syria* 13 (1932), 278 = *SEG* VII, nos. 138–139; the second = Cantineau, *Inv.* X, no. 44. See J. Starcky and M. Gawlikowski, *Palmyre* 2 (1985), 78–79.

[47] See Bowersock, *Roman Arabia,* 114–115.

[48] For what follows see Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 31ff.

[49] Herodian III, 3, 3; 6, 9 (Antioch as *kōmē*).

These arbitrary changes of name, of constitutional status (for all the inhabitants of the new *coloniae* will have become Roman citizens) and of mutual precedence, absurd though they may seem, are of considerable significance. From one point of view they are merely another example of the remarkable malleability of communal 'identities' in the Near East; from another, the local rivalries which they reveal suggest how dubious any notion of a *regional* identity or solidarity would be; from yet another, they are a clear reflection of the intensification of the Imperial presence and of Imperial attention in this period; and finally they mark the beginning of a period when, at least on the surface, the Near East became 'Roman' in a way of which there had been little trace before.

But that process applied also—and even more suddenly—to the newly conquered territory across the Euphrates. If the level of Roman involvement here in the period from 165 to 195 is uncertain, there can be no doubt about the drastic nature of the transformations which now took place. Nor can there be any doubt about the significance of this step as a deliberate product of Roman imperialism. For Cassius Dio records both the justification for it offered by Severus and his own doubts about the long-term strategic consequences: 'Severus . . . used to say that he had gained a very extensive territory and had made it a bulwark for Syria. But it is demonstrated by the facts as being the source of continual wars for us and of great expenditures. For it provides very little, and consumes very much, while we having advanced as far as the nearer of the Medes and Parthians are always as it were fighting on their behalf'.[51] This passage will almost certainly have been written after the fall of the Parthian Empire in the 220s and the rise of the new Persian dynasty, which offered a much more active threat to Rome. On the other hand, with two brief exceptions in the 250s, all of the endless Roman-Persian wars were to be fought east of the Euphrates, on what the Romans now claimed as provincial territory. But in essence Dio was correct.

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[50] HA, *v. Sept. Sev.* 9, 5, a possibility raised in Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 38.

[51] Dio LXXV, 3, 2–3.

New evidence shows just how quickly at least part (and probably all) of the new provincial framework was established east of the Euphrates. For a Latin inscription dating to 195, the year of Severus' first campaign, records how C. Iulius Pacatianus, *proc(urator) Aug(usti),* established boundaries between the 'provincia Osrhoena' and the kingdom of Abgar.[52] The boundary lay a mere 40 km west of Edessa, and new light is cast on what we knew already, the fact that the kingdom survived as an enclave after the Roman conquest. We will come back later to the complex evidence for Edessa in the time of Abgar, whose reign probably lasted from 177 until 212.[53] For the moment it is more important to note how small the geographical area of the kingdom seems to have been, and that it was surrounded or bordered by a new Roman province for which the name 'Osrhoena' had been taken over. There was naturally a provincial garrison, and in 197 we find a detachment of the legion IV Scythica, from Zeugma, building a *castellum* in the northwest of the new province, on the route across it between Zeugma and Samosata. Eight years after that, in 205, we find another *procurator* of the new province, L. Aelius Ianuarius, recorded on another Latin inscription, from the same place as the boundary-marker, as having been the Imperial agent for the construction of a road for forty-eight Roman miles (70 km) 'from the Euphrates to the boundary of the kingdom of Septimius Abgar'.[54]

It is thus certain that as early as 195 the area east of the Euphrates included the small dependent kingdom of Abgar and a minor province called Osrhoena, under an equestrian *procurator.* Within a few years there was also a major province further east, called Mesopotamia, with two legions; it was not, as would have been normal, placed under a *legatus* of ex-consul rank, but, like Egypt since the beginning, came under a *praefectus* of equestrian status. The change can have been no accident, and is an important step in the evolution of the Imperial system away from its roots in the Republican past.

Just how soon this major new province was organised is not quite certain, but it surely cannot have been later than 198 or 199, during Severus' second period of campaigning there.[55] An inscription from Bithynia records that Ti. Claudius Subatianus Aquila, before being prefect of Egypt (in 206–211), had been 'the first prefect of Mesopotamia'. For the reasons mentioned above, the point was worth making. Even with our fragmentary evidence, several different features of the new provincial and military structure are clear. First, Severus created three new legions (an increase of 10 percent in the legionary establishment of the Empire), called the I–III Parthicae, of which I and II were stationed in Mesopotamia. Exactly where I was stationed is not known; but II Parthica was in the south-east corner of the province at Singara, on the southern slopes of the Jebel Sinjar: 'which legion is at Singara in Mesopotamia by the river Tigris', as a legionary's tombstone from Aphrodisias in Caria was to record, exaggerating a little.[56] Moreover, at least two cities in the new province found themselves transformed, already in Severus' reign, into Roman *coloniae*. In the cases of Nisibis and Carrhae/Harran (only 50 km from Edessa but evidently outside the remaining *regnum* of Abgar) this is certain. It is quite likely also in two other cases, Reshaina and Singara, both of which later in the century had titles including the words 'Septimia colonia'.[57] Mesopotamia, whose greatest extension was yet to come, presents the clearest possible example of continuing Roman military expansionism from the later Imperial period. But for a fuller appreciation of that expansionism we need to look not just at the contested frontier with Parthia, but at the whole borderland of Roman control, from Mesopotamia to the Red Sea, over much of which Roman forces confronted not the army of a rival kingdom but the little-known peoples of the steppe.

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[52] *AE* (1984), no. 919. This, like the following inscriptions, was published by J. Wagner, "Provincia Osrhoenae" *(sic),* in Mitchell, *Armies and Frontiers,* 113.

[53] 12.5 below, and App. C.

[54] *AE* (1984), no. 918 *(castellum);* 920: '(Severus, Caracalla and Geta) viam ab Euphrate usque ad fines regni Sept. Ab<g>ari a novo munierunt, per L. Aelium Ianuarium proc. Aug. prov. Osrhoenae m.p. XXXXVIII'.

[55] For what follows see D. L. Kennedy, "Ti. Claudius Subatianus Aquila, 'First Prefect of Mesopotamia'", *ZPE* 36 (1979), 255; and "The Garrisoning of Mesopotamia in the Late Antonine and Early Severan Periods", *Antichthon* 21 (1987), 57.

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56. J. Reynolds and M. Speidel, "A Veteran of I Parthica from Carian Aphrodisias", *Epigraphica Anatolica* 5 (1985), 31 = *AE* (1985), no. 800. The creation of these two legions by Severus, and the fact that they were stationed in Mesopotamia, is recorded by Dio LV, 24, 4.

57. Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 38–39.

CHAPTER

4

ROME AND MESOPOTAMIA: FROM PARTHIA TO PERSIA

4.1. THE SEVERAN NEAR EAST AS A MILITARY STRUCTURE

The military history of the Near East, as of any other region, cannot be separated from its social history. For a start, the life of the units of the Roman army, distributed across the immensely varied landscapes of the Near East, is itself an aspect of social and economic history. It is also, in many important ways, an aspect of cultural and religious history. The soldiers, drawn from many different parts of the Empire, may often have brought their own cults with them. But what we actually see much more clearly, from Hatra in Iraq to Dura-Europos, or from Dumayr between Damascus and Palmyra to the great temple of Baetocaece high up in the mountain-range behind Arados, is how soldiers of the Roman army made dedications to local deities, and thus (as in so many other ways) integrated themselves into the life of the region. The approach to the Near East adopted here began with the dedication which a soldier of IV Scythica made at Dura-Europos in the first half of the third century, in honour of 'the ancestral god, Zeus Betylos, of those by the Orontes'. An even more complex example is provided by the dedication of a statue of 'Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus', made, probably in the second half of the second century, by Sextius Rasius Proculus, *praefectus* of the Cohors II Thracum Syriaca. It comes from a place of some significance, namely Suhneh (Suknah), on the road north from Palmyra to Sura on the Euphrates, and where a road may have diverged east to reach the river at Circesium. As it happens, this is one of only two explicitly labelled representations of the Iuppiter of Heliopolis. But it will not in fact help with the controversial question of the god's iconography; for Proculus simply used a statue of purely Palmyrene local workmanship.[1]

But does the making of a Latin dedication at this place by a Roman *praefectus* mean that his unit, which we know to have been stationed in Syria, occupied a post on this strategic road?[2] An aerial photograph reveals a rectangular structure of *circa* 110 m by 80 m there, which may have been a small auxiliary fort.[3] But if this and perhaps other forts, lying within the zone of Palmyrene settlement and occupation in the steppe and along the Euphrates, were occupied by Roman units, how did this military presence work in relation to Palmyrene police activity and the protection of caravans against the nomads? Was this route, going northwards, in fact a trade-route at all?

A sketch of some of the more salient features of what little we know of the army in the decades before and after AD 200 will of course reveal how erratic our evidence is, and how rarely we can prove that a military presence anywhere was continuous over more than a very short period. But we should not yield too readily to scepticism. Even our fragmentary evidence reflects great changes and an extension of the Roman military presence over vast areas where in the first century AD it had been quite unknown.

It was of course in Mesopotamia that the changes, already discussed, had been most dramatic. If we cannot be sure where the legion III Parthica was stationed, perhaps Nisibis,[4] it is certain that I Parthica was at Singara, where it still appears in Ammianus' narrative of events in 360. By then Singara was a fortified city, defended both by its inhabitants and by two of the now smaller Roman legions, but through lack of water had been captured several times already, as it was again now.[5] The line of the Roman fortifications, of uncertain date, is still visible from the air.[6] The normal construction of roads also followed (broadly reproducing the abortive process under Trajan a century earlier), and a Roman milestone of 231/232 has been found some 5 km south-west of Singara;[7] given its position, it might perhaps indicate a road leading towards the Chabur and then down the Euphrates. Roman outposts will very probably have extended also to the Tigris; it was probably in the early third century that a Roman veteran *(ouetranos)* put up beside the Tigris a bilingual dedication to Zeus, in Greek and Aramaic.[8] But our most vivid evidence for the limits of Roman occupation comes from Hatra, some 115 km south-east of Singara. All that we know from narrative sources is that both Trajan and Severus had failed to capture this walled city with its great temple of the Sun. An aerial photograph again brings out with remarkable clarity the roughly circular line of walls, the street-plan and the oblong enclosure of the temple at the centre.[9] By the 230s Roman forces were there. Again the evidence comes from dedications, one to the local deity: of three Latin inscriptions from there, contrasting with a long series of several hundred Aramaic ones,[10] one gives the date 235; one is a dedication to Hercules by a tribune of I Parthica, apparently also tribune of Cohors IX Maurorum Gordiana (so in the reign of Gordian, 238–244); and one, by the same man, is to the 'Unconquered Sun God' ('Deus Sol Invictus') of Hatra.[11] Whether this was an alliance or an occupation, and when it began, is not known. But it is certain that Hatra was captured by the Persians in about 240, and it seems never to have been retaken.[12]

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[1] For the inscription (*AE* 1911, no. 124) and the statue see Y. Hajjar, *La triade d'Héliopolis-Baalbek* I (1977), 211, no. 186 and Pl. LXX.

[2] The unit is listed on a *diploma* of 157, *CIL* XVI, no. 106.

[3] Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*, 143–144.

[4] So Kennedy, *Antichthon* 21 (1987), 61.

[5] Ammianus XX, 6, 1–8.

[6] Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*, 125–131.

[7] J. N. Fiey, "A Roman Milestone from Sinjar", *Sumer* 8 (1952), 229; see A. Maricq, *Syria* 34 (1957), 294, and D. Oates, *Studies in the Ancient History of Northern Iraq* (1968), 73.

Hatra was thus a mere outpost, which did not stay long in Roman hands. If there was a 'frontier' of Mesopotamia other than the Tigris, it should have lain along the Chabur River, running south-west down to the Euphrates. But there is no specific evidence, datable to this period, to tell us whether there was a line of forts, or a road, along the river. As soon as we come within the range of the evidence provided by either the papyri and parchments of Dura-Europos or the newly available ones from the middle Euphrates, our ability to catch at least some glimpses of the system is restored. Indeed one contribution from the new documents is precisely to suggest regular connections between the zone of villages near the middle Euphrates, above and below its confluence with the Chabur, and the cities of Osrhoene and Mesopotamia: Edessa, Marcopolis, Nisibis, Carrhae, Singara.[13] To give two precise examples, two separate sales of slaves conducted at Beth Phouraia on the Euphrates refer back to previous sales of the same slaves at Nisibis; and in one of these cases the seller had been the wife of a centurion of the legion I Parthica.[14] Again it is important that we can now at least glimpse the economic and social integration of the soldiers into local society.

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[8] See D. L. Kennedy, "A Lost Latin Inscription from the Banks of the Tigris", *ZPE* 73 (1988), 325. The reality of this inscription is doubted by C. S. Lightfoot and J. F. Healey, "A Roman Veteran on the Tigris", *Epig. Anat.* 17 (1991), 1, publishing the very significant bilingual inscription, on which see further 13.1 below.

[9] Kennedy and Riley, *RDF,* 106–107.

[10] See F. Vattioni, *Le iscrizioni di Hatra* (1981); see H. J. W. Drijvers, "Hatra, Palmyra and Edessa", *ANRW* II.8 (1977), 799. As Hatra was so briefly under Roman occupation, it will not be considered further in this chapter.

[11] See A. Maricq, "Les dernières années d'Hatra: L'alliance romaine", *Syria* 34 (1957), 288; *AE* (1958), nos. 238–240.

[12] 4.2 below.

[13] 4.2 and 12.5 below.

Both the middle Euphrates and Dura lay within the new province of Syria Coele, whose two legions, the XVI Flavia Firma and the IV Scythica, may or may not have kept as their main bases Samosata and Zeugma far to the north. It is not known when they moved south to the stations where they are found at the end of the fourth century: XVI at Sura and IV at Oresa (Tayibeh) on the road to Palmyra.[15] Nor is there any inscriptional or archaeological evidence for the Roman posts along the Euphrates between the Balikh and the Chabur, and below the Chabur as far as Dura, in the third century. But there was a line of posts above and below Dura, even though this was now not a frontier facing hostile territory. It was both a narrow strip of cultivable land and an important military and civilian route. When the Persians invaded in the 250s, they were to move not across but along it, destroying a long series of small places as they went.

Although there is no evidence on the ground datable to this period, the evidence from the new archive from the middle Euphrates and from the extensive military archives from Dura can combine to give a real impression of the military presence. It will be worth listing a few examples.[16] For instance we find that a villager living at Birtha Okbanon had complained (without effect) to a centurion stationed there, saying that his vineyard had been occupied by a neighbour. Another, from a village called Magdala, complained in 243 to the centurion 'in charge of public order in Sphoracene' about a murder and robbery; when the complaint was laid at Appadana, testimony was given by a veteran and a serving soldier of XVI Flavia Firma. Both a place called Birtha and one called Magdala appear in the Dura archives as posts to which small detachments were sent out; and Birtha Okbanon and Sphoracene appear in the list of his conquests in the 250s set up by the Persian king Shapur I.

The soldier of legion XVI, testifying as a private person, is matched by the one from the same legion with the historic name 'Aurelius Corbulo', who is recorded in a document of 232 as making a contract at Beth Phouraia, a village on the Euphrates in the territory of Appadana; Aurelius Corbulo was a pilot *(gubernator)* in legion XVI, and was selling a boat (in bad repair) located on the river. Finally we find a soldier from a *numerus* of Palmyrenes making a formal agreement at Appadana to regard as settled a debt due to him from a woman living at Dusaris (*perhaps* the place Dausara far to the north near Callinicum).

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[14] See D. Feissel and J. Gascou, "Documents romains inédits du Moyen-Euphrate (III^{e} s. après J.-C.)", *CRAI* (1989), 559, nos. 8 and 9. See more fully 4.2 below.

[15] *Not. Dign., Or.* 33, 28 (Sura); 23 (Oresa).

[16] Feissel and Gascou, op. cit., 557–558, nos. 2 and 5 (complaints); 559, no. 11 (sale of boat); 560, no. 14 (settlement of debt).

These views of local society and the role (both official and private) of soldiers within it are closely paralleled, for just this area, by the documents from Dura-Europos. One of the most notable documents from there is a Greek deed of sale of AD 226, drawn up in the winter-quarters *(paracheimasia)* of the Cohors III Augusta Thracum at a village called Sachare. The purchaser was a veteran of the same cohort living in the area; and the land, consisting of vineyards and orchards, was bounded by the Chabur River on the one side and a canal on the other. Five serving soldiers signed as witnesses, four in Latin and one in Greek. The village of Sachare may have lain some 25 km up the Chabur from the Euphrates. But the document is beyond price in revealing that there were auxiliary camps on this river also, and in saying so much about the economy of the strip along the river.[17]

In such a document we see the role of military units and individual soldiers as it were from below, from within local society. The military archives proper from Dura of course give a different impression. But they too show how small detachments were strung along the Euphrates in this period, as well as illustrating how detachments from the two legions of the province, IV and XVI, could be present as far south as this. The best impression of how the river functioned as a route, lined with military posts, is provided by the letter which the *legatus* of Syria Coele, Marius Maximus, wrote in 207 or 208 about provisions for a Parthian envoy on his way to or from the court of Severus and Caracalla. It was addressed to the *tribuni* and *praefecti* and the *praepositi* of *numeri,* and ended by listing five places on the river, in order from north to south: Gazica (near the confluence with the Chabur), Appadana, Dura, Eddana and Biblada.[18] Appadana in particular appears many times in the Dura documents as a place to which detachments were sent, and we can assume that there were military posts at all these places.

The history of Dura as a garrison town from the 190s to its end in the 250s is very well attested, and can be briefly summarised here.[19] Detachments of legions IV and XVI are found building a shrine to Mithras in 209, and ones of IV and III Cyrenaica (from Bostra in Arabia) an amphitheatre in 216. References to XVI continue in the 220s, and almost the last document of Roman Dura is a Greek divorce-deed of 254, involving a soldier of legion IV, now called IV Scythica Valeriana Galliena. Three years earlier two Greek dedications show that an auxiliary unit with the title 'Cohors II Paphlagonum Galliena Volusiana' was also at Dura.[20]

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[17] *P. Dura,* no. 26.

[18] *P. Dura,* no. 60B. See M. L. Chaumont, "Un document méconnu concernant l'envoi d'un ambassadeur parthe vers Septime Sévère (P. Dura 60B)", *Historia* 36 (1987), 423.

[19] See J. F. Gilliam, op. cit. (3.4, n.15).

But these passing mentions cannot of course be made into a history of the garrison. The stable element, which is very fully attested, is the XXth cohort of Palmyrenes, perhaps raised first in the 190s; whether it had any connection with the Palmyrene archers who were there before is not known. It is first recorded at Dura in 208, and seems to have been there to the end. Of the vast range of detail revealed about military life, we may pick out, first, the hints of the rather strikingly detailed control exercised by the *legatus*, from northern Syria, by letter. One document reveals soldiers sent with letters 'to the headquarters of the governor', and two others contain letters of the *legatus*, Marius Maximus, assigning horses to individually named soldiers; one is written from Hierapolis and one from Antioch.[21] Second, of some ten *tribuni* or *praepositi* of the cohort whose names are known, one, Iulius Terentius, holding his post in the late 230s, has achieved a particular fame. For it is he who is represented, and named, in the well-known wall-painting from the temple of Bel showing him leading his men in a sacrifice to the *Tychai* (personified Fortunes) of Palmyra and Dura and to three other gods who may be Palmyrene.[22] Once again, a member of the Roman army can be seen paying his respects to local deities. It is certain that the Iulius Terentius who is identified on the mural is a tribune of this cohort, for he is named also in the Greek verse epitaph which his wife put up to him when he died in battle.[23] The occasion was perhaps the moment in April 239 when 'the Persians descended upon us', as a graffito records.[24]

Third, since its excavation Dura has always been regarded as providing the major case where we can see the occupation of a whole quarter of a walled town by the army, and its physical reconstruction to serve the needs of the army. Thus one building with a number of Latin inscriptions is interpreted as a *praetorium* (headquarters-building) with a 'house of the prefect' beside it; and a brick wall which can be traced for some distance through the city is taken to mark the boundary of the new military quarter.[25] Other buildings

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[20] *P. Dura*, no. 32; *Dura Report* IX.3, 110–114, nos. 971 and 972.

[21] *P. Dura*, no. 82, col. ii, l. 7; 56B–C (Marius Maximus).

[22] Published by F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Dura-Europos* (1926), 89ff. (where the temple is still called the temple of the Palmyrene gods); A. Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos* (1973), 42ff. and Pl. 12 (now in Yale University Art Gallery); cf. M. A. R. Colledge, *The Art of Palmyra* (1970), 228–229. See further 12.4 below.

[23] See C. B. Welles, "The Epitaph of Julius Terentius", *HThR* 34 (1941), 79; *Dura Reports* IX.1, 176, no. 939.

[24] *Dura Reports* IV, 110, no. 233B.

[25] *Dura Reports* V, 201–237.

(baths, the Mithraeum, an amphitheatre) in whose construction soldiers took part are also held to be part of this development. Most controversially of all, one elaborate building with a portico overlooking the Euphrates has been labelled 'the Palace of the Dux Ripae'. But the evidence for the identification consists of two painted inscriptions in Greek from this building, commemorating slaves of Domitius Pompeianus, who in one of these is called *dux ripae.*[26] This identification, and the excavators' conception of the military takeover of the whole quarter, may be correct. But it is all very uncertain, and cannot be used for historical purposes. What is certain is (in general) no more than the clear evidence for the close integration of the army into the life of the town. But a more particular point which these and other documents do establish is that the late-Roman military rank of *dux,* not a technical term in the High Empire, had come into use at Dura in the first half of the third century.[27] But *dux ripae*—'commander of the bank or frontier' (transliterated in Greek as *doux tēs reipēs*)—appears only in the one painted inscription just mentioned. Until there is clearer evidence, too much effort should not be devoted to constructing a picture of his regional military responsibilities—or to admiring the luxury of his residence.

For our conception of the military structure of the Empire, it would be more important to know how much further down the Euphrates below Dura Roman military occupation extended, and how it related to Palmyrene control. As we have seen, there were certainly Roman outposts at places called Eddana and Biblada; the latter *may* be the little fort of the Severan period which looks out over the Euphrates at Ertaje, from the east bank.[28] Not far below that, we come to the island of Ana, or Anatha, which Julian was to capture from the Persians during his invasion of 363.[29] In the late 250s, however, it is listed first by Shapur I in his record of the places captured in his third invasion, and we would thus take it to have been then a Roman outpost.[30] But Palmyrene inscriptions of 132 and of around 200 show that Palmyra kept a cavalry force there (or in the latter case 'at Gamla and 'Ana'). More important, another Palmyrene inscription, of AD 225, mentions a '*stratēgos* at 'Ana and Gamla' ('SṬRTG 'L 'N' WGML'). What is significant about this inscription is above all its location, at Umm es Selabeikh, some 120 km west-south-west of Palmyra on the road crossing the steppe to the lower-middle Euphrates.[31]

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[26] *Dura Reports* IX.3, *The Palace of the Dux Ripae and the Dolichenum* (1952): for the inscriptions 30ff., nos. 945 (ὁ Δομιτίου [Πο]μπηιανοῦ τοῦ ἁγνοῦ καὶ δικαίου δουκὸς τῆς ῥείπης θρεπτός) and 946.

[27] Gilliam, op. cit. (3.4, n.15), 23, and idem, "The Dux Ripae at Dura", *TAPhA* 72 (1941), 157.

[28] Kennedy and Riley, *RDF,* 224–225.

[29] Ammianus XXIV, 1, 6–10.

[30] 4.3 below.

There can be no doubt therefore that even after Roman occupation extended to this area of the Euphrates, the Palmyrenes continued to exercise some military or police role on the route across the steppe, and on the river itself. How did that relate to the Roman presence there, if any? Equally significant (and perhaps more so than might appear at first sight) is the question of whether any Roman troops stationed on this stretch of the river belonged to Syria Coele (as did those at Dura) or to Syria Phoenice, with its one legion some 300 km away at Raphaneae. The fact that the Palmyrenes retained a force at Ana even in the 220s might suggest that Biblada was the last outpost of Syria Coele, and that the lower stretch of the river belonged to Syria Phoenice, and was militarily dependent on Palmyra.[32] If so, that would fit perfectly with the discovery of a Palmyrene inscription of the late second century some 20 km south of Ertaje which seems to say that the person commemorated 'came to the limit of the frontier' in the *stratēgia* (B'SṬRṬGWT) of Iarhai.[33] However, archaeological evidence (coins, and graffiti in Greek) from the settlement of Kifrin, which lies below Ana, on the left bank of the river, might suggest a Roman occupation there in the first half of the third century. *If* that is so, and if Kifrin is the place called Bechuphrein to which troops were occasionally posted from Dura,[34] then the notion of two clearly distinguished military/provincial zones is not valid.

Archaeological evidence (pottery, Imperial coins and some fragmentary graffiti in Palmyrene, Aramaic and—a single name—Latin) also suggest a Roman, or Romano-Palmyrene, occupation of the island of Bidjan, 150 km downstream from Dura, in the first few decades of the third century, without allowing any greater precision.[35] But, as we will see, Shapur's record of his victories in the 250s identifies no place downstream from Ana, or Anatha, and there is no known evidence for either a Roman or a Palmyrene military presence, for instance at Haditha, or at Hit, towards which the road from Palmyra through Umm es Selabeikh seems to have led. Nonetheless, the relative fragility of the Roman hold on this area and the importance of Palmyra for the whole eastern zone of Syria Phoenice have a considerable bearing on the events of the 260s and the brief Palmyrene Empire.

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[31] For the Palmyrene inscriptions referring to Ana see A. Northedge, A. Bamber and M. Roaf, *Excavations at 'Āna, Qal'a Island* (1988), 6–7; for the road see A. Poidebard, *La trace de Rome dans le désert de Syrie* I (1934), 105–114, and Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*, 80–81.

[32] So M. Gawlikowski, "The Roman Frontier on the Euphrates", *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987), 77, on p. 78.

[33] J. Starcky, "Une inscription palmyrénienne trouvée près de l'Euphrate", *Syria* 40 (1963), 47.

[34] See, e.g., A. Invernizzi, "Kifrin and the Euphrates Limes", in Freeman and Kennedy, *DRBE*, 357. In *P. Dura*, no. 46, a soldier mentions in a letter that he has been on campaign to Βηχχουφρείν, and in the rosters of the Cohors XX Palmyrenorum 'Becchuf(r)' appears several times; see nos. 82, 100, 101.

[35] So M. Gawlikowski, "L'île de Bedjan, forteresse assyrienne et romaine", *Archéologia* 178 (May 1983), 26; "Bejan Island", *Arch. f. Or.* 29/30 (1984), 207; "Bijan in the Euphrates", *Sumer* 42 (1985), 15.

It is thus very significant that there is nothing in our evidence to suggest that the legion III Gallica, or detachments of it, either guarded the lower-middle Euphrates or policed the steppe against the *nomades;* resisting their attacks on caravans was, as it seems, a purely Palmyrene function. Yet this state of affairs was evidently compatible with what seems to have been an established presence of auxiliary units (perhaps not more than one at a time) at Palmyra itself.[36] We have already encountered the inscription in honour of Vibius Celer, 'prefect of the *ala* (stationed) here' in the second half of the second century.[37] For most of the century the units attested were all mounted *alae;* one, the Ala Vocontiorum, apparently just arrived from Egypt, is found constructing a *campus* (training-ground) in 183.

A garrison also continued after Severus' division of Syria, but in the form of a part-mounted cohort, the Cohors I Flavia Chalcidenorum equitata, which is mentioned on inscriptions from there in 206/207 and in the reign of Philip (244–249).[38] This raises the question of the Roman military presence, not east of Palmyra, but south-west of it, in the direction of Damascus. For before this period the same unit is recorded on a Latin inscription of 162 found built into the wall of a surviving Roman *castellum* at Maqsura.[39] The location is important, 5 km to the east of Dumayr, the site of a major temple of Zeus. Dumayr itself lies 45 km east of Damascus on the main route towards Palmyra. This was where there was to be, in the Tetrarchic period, the major Roman route, lined with *castella* or guard-posts, called the Strata Diocletiana. It is not in the least certain that what this *cohors* was building in 162 was precisely the large *castellum* still visible in the modern period. But they were clearly building something, and with that we therefore have the earliest evidence for this route as the site of Roman construction and military activity. It was of course a sign, and a product, of the integration of both Palmyra and Damascus into the Imperial military system; and (as we will see) it relates also to the integration of the area south of Damascus, effectively possible only after the absorption of the kingdom of Agrippa II. As so often, so it seems, the development of the Roman military system went in parallel with civilian development. Thus at the major temple of Dumayr itself, at an indeterminate date in the later second or third century, a *strator* of a *praefectus* of the Ala Vocontiorum contributed to building-work out of his own pocket. This was, however, a mixed case, for the man belonged to this place, whose ancient name was Thelsea, and identified himself as a 'Thelseēnos'.[40] In this local context this was no insignificant claim. For the temple of Zeus there was a major local centre, and was to be the subject, in 216, of a case heard before Caracalla in person; and the '*mētrokōmē* ('mother-village') of the Thelseēnoi' is a classic instance of those important villages which are so characteristic of the Near East, and hardly seem to have 'depended' on any city.[41]

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[36] For a survey of the known evidence see H. Seyrig, "Textes relatifs à la garnison romaine de Palmyre", *Syria* 14 (1933), 152, with corrections and additions by M. Speidel, "Numerus ou ala Vocontiorum à Palmyre", *Syria* 49 (1972), 494 = (in English) *Roman Army Studies* I (1984), 571.

[37] 3.4 above.

[38] *AE* (1969–70), nos. 610–611 (206/207); 1933, no. 216 (238/244).

[39] *CIL* III, no. 6658 = Le Bas-W., no. 2562d. On the *castellum,* R. E. Brünnow and A. von Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia* III (1909), 187ff.; Poidebard, *Trace,* 43.

If Thelsea had depended on a city (and it may in theory have done so), it would surely have been Damascus. Earlier characterised by apparent isolation from the main part of the then single province of Syria, Damascus was now, at least in some sense, solidly embedded in provincial territory, and must have been relatively prominent among the cities of Syria Coele. The very limited evidence surviving from this continuously inhabited place, however, makes its history as a city in the Roman period remarkably mysterious;[42] and since as always so much of our evidence for military and for civilian history depends on honorific or building inscriptions, our conception of the Roman military presence here is also very limited.

As we have seen, the Severan period shows at least the beginnings of a Roman military presence along what would later be the 'Strata Diocletiana' linking Damascus to Palmyra and the Euphrates. But in geographical terms the large oasis of Damascus, formed by the run-off of rivers from the mountain massif behind, was also a frontier zone; for as soon as the very rich oasis area stopped, some 30 km east of Damascus, the steppe began. Whatever reasons lay behind the clearly attested extension of Roman forts into the steppe both north-east and (as we will see) south-east of Damascus in this period should have applied to the oasis also. But so far the only evidence for that is an unpublished Latin inscription from Gaslaniye, south-east of Damascus, showing the Ala I Pannoniorum equitata engaged in building-work in the 180s.[43] Indeed these reasons ought to have applied more strongly here. For if the *nomades* of the steppe needed to be watched or controlled, so had in the past the inhabitants of Trachonitis to the south of Damascus, and also the Ituraeans of the mountain massif behind the city.

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[40] See N. Ehrhardt, "Die ala Vocontiorum und die Datierung des Tempels von Dmeir", *ZPE* 65 (1986), 225.

[41] 9.3 below.

[42] 9.3 below.

[43] J.-P. Rey-Coquais, *JRS* 68 (1978), 68, n.332 = *AE* (1978), no. 818.

But the fact is that we know virtually nothing of the Roman military system, if there was one, in this area in the Severan period. It is quite unclear whether military observation of the mountain massif, as a sort of inner frontier, was still required. The one certain aspect of the military presence is the road which now ran from Damascus across Trachonitis (the Lejja) to Bostra, already discussed.[44] What would be significant would be to know if in this period, as certainly later under the Tetrarchy, there were Roman forts or routes in the steppe zone east of Trachonitis and the Jebel Hauran, which linked up with the roads and forts which we know for this period in the Jordanian steppe to the south. The sole evidence datable (broadly) to this period is provided by Greek and Latin graffiti which seem to make clear that Roman soldiers at least visited a small oasis in the steppe some 50 km east of the northern Jebel Hauran, at a place called en-Namara: the fragmentary inscriptions there reveal a *dromedarius,* a non-commissioned officer *(dekadarchos),* and a cavalryman of the legion III Cyrenaica stationed at Bostra.[45] It thus seems clear that the steppe zone fell within the province of Arabia. This site becomes of immense importance later, because of the inscription which an Arab king was to put up there in 328.[46] But for the whole borderland of the steppe, from the Damascus–Palmyra route in the north to the southern fringes of the Jebel Hauran, a distance of some 130 km, we have to confess that there is no evidence as to whether there were any established Roman forts or not in the Severan period.

For the steppe region south of the Jebel Hauran, however, there is significant evidence.[47] The fact that it is (as always) fragmentary and subject to the accidents of discovery, and that it is never possible in principle to prove that something attested at a certain date first began at that date, should not blind us to the fact that until now there has been no evidence earlier than the late second century for a Roman military presence in this region. The salient items of evidence may be briefly noted. First, at Qasr-al-Hallabat, some 30 km north-east of Amman, the remains of a Roman fort include an inscription of

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[44] 3.3 above.

[45] Le Bas-W., nos. 2264–2285. See Poidebard, *Trace,* 61–62.

[46] 11.5 below.

[47] For this region, from which only a few salient items of evidence are picked out here, see D. L. Kennedy, *Archaeological Explorations on the Roman Frontier in North East Jordan* (1982); D. L. Kennedy and H. I. MacAdam, "Some Latin Inscriptions from the Azraq Oasis", *ZPE* 65 (1988), 231; S. T. Parker, *Romans and Saracens: A History of the Arabian Frontier* (1986); idem, "The Roman *Limes* in Jordan", in A. Hadidi (ed.), *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* III (1987), 151.

212 recording that a 'new fort' *(castellum novum)* had been built by the soldiers of four auxiliary cohorts.[48]

More significant still is the cluster of evidence from the area of the Azraq oasis, lying in the true steppe made up of a vast field of dark stones and, more important, on the route to the Wadi Sirhan, leading south-east into Arabia proper. Whether this was, as has been suggested, a major trade-route leading to the Persian Gulf will have to be discussed later.[49] But the fact that it was a route is beyond question. Azraq lies some 80 km east of Amman, and military occupation in this area was eventually to be significant in relation not only to the Wadi Sirhan but to a Roman road leading north towards Damascus. For the Severan period, however, what we know for certain is that there was road-building here under Severus, though in what direction is uncertain (the milestones recording it are not in position); and that some 14 km south-west of Azraq, at Qasr el Uweinid, a detachment of III Cyrenaica constructed a *castellum et praesidium Severianum* in 205.[50]

This activity would be of some interest even if there were no probable connections to the Wadi Sirhan. But in fact from Jawf, some 400 km down the Wadi from Azraq, there is a Latin inscription of a centurion of III Cyrenaica, dedicated 'for the safety of our (two) lords the Augusti' to Iuppiter Optimus Hammon and a deity called Sanctus Sulmus.[51] The date should certainly be the early part of the third century.[52] There is nothing to show whether a permanent post was established here; but given the vast distances involved, even occasional patrols would reflect a Roman involvement in this area which would have been unimaginable in the first century. Dumatha (Jawf) was also, it may be recalled, the place whose people, according to Porphyry, had carried out human sacrifice and still conceived of an altar as being itself an object of worship.[53]

Much—indeed everything—is speculative about how the Roman army operated in such a context, and what it was intended to achieve. But what is certain is that, as on the Euphrates and Chabur, it must represent a line of movement through an area, not a 'frontier' held as a line against a putative enemy attacking from the side. Much the same will be true of the military presence in the central and southern part of Arabia, where the traceable evidence of the Roman army never appears far from the Via Nova Traiana, built in the first few years of the province. From Bostra the road ran south-east to

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[48] Kennedy, *Explorations,* 39, no. 3.

[49] 13.1 below.

[50] Kennedy, *Explorations,* 169–175 (milestones); 113ff. (Qasr el Uweinid).

[51] Kennedy, *Explorations,* 190; see Bowersock, *Roman Arabia,* App. 2.

[52] See M. Speidel, "The Roman Road to Dumata (Jawf in Saudi Arabia)", *Historia* 36 (1987), 213.

[53] Ch. 1 above.

Amman (Philadelphia) and then south along the border between the cultivated plateau of Moab and the steppe proper, then to descend a steep escarpment to reach the Red Sea at Aila. In fact, however, to say that is simply to repeat in effect what is claimed on milestones of the reign of Trajan, found (only) on the northern part of the road, between Bostra and Philadelphia; other milestones of later reigns can be found in considerable numbers both in that area and further south, as far as Petra. But for the stretch between Petra and Aila there is no precisely datable physical evidence, though stretches of the road, with associated small forts, are visible.

Though the line of the road across the southern desert, the Hisma, to Aila (Aqaba) has some milestones, no inscriptions have been read on these, so nothing definite can be said on dating. While it need not be doubted that Trajan's Via Nova did reach Aqaba, we cannot identify anything more than a road, with side-roads westwards, and watch-towers.[54] Why it was built at all, whether it had some relation to trade from the Red Sea, and how occupation in this area in the Roman period compared with that in the preceding Nabataean period are all uncertain.

What is certain, however, is that a Roman official and military presence did not stop at Aqaba, but followed the earlier Nabataean presence at least as far as Medain Saleh in the northern Hedjaz.[55] For from the region of Medain Saleh—some 900 km from Bostra and the main camp of the legion III Cyrenaica—there are graffiti in a mixture of Greek and Latin in Greek transliteration (as well as other Nabataean ones), which reveal Roman *dromedarii* and cavalrymen of an *ala* of Gaetuli; and a roughly inscribed *stele* contains a Greek dedication to the Fortune of Bostra by a painter with the legion III Cyrenaica.[56] It is worth reflecting that the march back to the legionary base at Bostra would have taken at least a month.

As so often, we do not know how permanent the Roman presence here was. Certainly there is nothing to suggest a regular military occupation; once again we seem to be concerned with a route, for we know from Pliny the Elder, writing in the 70s, that there was a land-route from Arabia Felix (Yemen) which passed through this area, needing sixty-five camel-stages to reach Gaza.[57]

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[54] For a sceptical view of the extent of the Roman military presence in the southern area, see J. Eadie, "The Evolution of the Roman Frontier in Arabia", in Freeman and Kennedy, *DRBE* I, 243. See also Isaac, *Limits,* 122ff.

[55] The essential evidence here is well known, and again I merely pick out the salient points. See Sartre, *Trois Etudes,* 30–38; Bowersock, *Roman Arabia,* 95–98.

[56] See H. Seyrig, "Postes romains sur la route de Médine", *Syria* 22 (1941), 218: for example Φολσκιανὸς Σεουερος ἔκυυης ἄλε Γετουλῶν. For the painter, Bowersock, op. cit., 96 = *AE* (1977), no. 835: Τύχῃ Βόστρων 'Αδριανὸς ζωγράφος σὺν λεγ. III Κυ.

[57] Pliny, *NH* XII, 32/64–65. See 13.1 below.

We can hardly expect to gain any clear conception of the peoples of this region, or of their culture and social structure. But the Romans were of course aware of a large number of different peoples in the Arabian peninsula, for instance the 'Tamudaei' or 'Thamudēnoi' to whom Pliny and Ptolemy refer.[58] It could be assumed that the *legatus* of Arabia would have had to conduct some diplomatic relations with such peoples. But it could hardly have been expected that at Ruwwafa, some 200 km north-west of Medain Saleh, we should have available a formal record of such relations, inscribed in Greek and Nabataean on a temple dedicated on behalf of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, in the later 160s. The group which erected the temple is described in Greek as 'the *ethnos* of the Thamoudēnoi' and in Nabataean as ŠRKT TMWDW, perhaps 'confederation (of the) Thamud'. The governor, Antistius Adventus ('NṬSṬYS 'DWNTS HGMWN' in Nabataean), is described as having made peace among them.[59]

Neither the inscription nor the temple to which it refers will necessarily indicate that either of the two governors who are mentioned, Adventus and his apparent successor, Claudius Modestus, in whose time the temple was dedicated, actually came to Ruwwafa in person. Nor is it worth asking whether this place was within the frontiers of the province; for there may well have been no such defined frontier. What is certain is that this place, used by the Thamud to erect a temple, was within the sphere of influence both of the Roman governor and of Graeco-Nabataean culture. We are not, however, yet in the period when independent Arab tribes had treaty-relations with Rome; nor, so far as is known, had units drawn from these yet entered regular Roman service. It is only in the late fourth century that we know that the Roman army included units of 'Equites Saraceni Thamudeni'.[60]

It has even been suggested that the word ŠRKT, supposed to mean 'federation', is the origin of the term 'Saracen' itself; that is, that the term was borrowed in Greek and Latin to refer to Arab tribal federations. That seems far-fetched.[61] As it happens, the earliest attested use of the term comes from Ptolemy's *Geography*, of the mid-second century: here a people called Sarakēnoi are listed immediately before those called Thamudēnoi.[62] But nonetheless, for a whole complex of reasons, the relations, both political and cultural, on display in the bilingual inscription of Ruwwafa were of momentous consequence for the future.

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[58] Pliny, *NH* VI, 32/157; Ptolemy, *Geog.* VI, 7, 21, ed. Nobbe.

[59] G. W. Bowersock, "The Greek-Nabataean Bilingual Inscription at Ruwwāfa, Saudi Arabia", in *Le monde grec: Hommages à Claire Préaux* (1975), 513 = *AE* (1977), no. 834.

[60] *Not. Dign., Or.* 28, 17.

[61] See M. P. O'Connor, "The Etymology of *Saracen* in Aramaic and Pre-Islamic Arabic Contexts", in Freeman and Kennedy, *DRBE* II, 603.

[62] Ptolemy, *Geog.* VI, 7, 21, ed. Nobbe.

No Roman of the second or third century, or indeed for long after, would have imagined that it would be from this direction that the dominance of Graeco-Roman civilisation in the Near East would one day be destroyed, and by a major invasion. Contemporaries were, however, conscious that Imperial expansion had brought them into significant contact with persons whom they called Arabs. Contemporaries of Septimius Severus indeed could not have failed to be aware of 'Arabs' as political or actual enemies. For 'Arabicus' appeared among Imperial victory-titles, for the first time ever, under Severus and his son Caracalla: so for instance 'Arabicus Adiabenicus Parthicus Britannicus Maximus'. But the allusion was not to any frontier wars fought in what Romans called Arabia, but to the conquest of Mesopotamia. However we interpret the function or purpose of the long line of Roman roads and occasional legionary fortresses, as well as auxiliary forts and guard-posts, which in the Severan period has left traces over a distance of some 1250 km from the middle Tigris to Aqaba, and whether we want to call it a 'frontier' at all, the significant fact is that it was now *there,* approximately covering the limits of regularly cultivable land, and bringing Roman forces along its whole length into contact with non-sedentary peoples whom they called indiscriminately Arabs, and began in the second and third centuries to call Saracens. To emphasise the scale and (by comparison with the first century) the novelty of this involvement is neither to imply that this 'frontier' had been created as a defence against large-scale invasion nor to suggest that nomadic communities, brigands and essentially unsubdued peoples did not exist also within the provinces. It is striking, for instance, that Severus' contemporary Ulpian describes Palmyra as 'located near barbarous *gentes* and *nationes*'.[63] The modern notion of symbiosis between nomads and settled populations, while no doubt objectively valid for the steppe zone of the Roman Near East, was not shared by Graeco-Roman observers. The threat of a potential invader was not a necessary condition for there to be a major and complex problem of security, in which military and police functions might be largely indistinguishable. But in any case continued Roman imperialism in Mesopotamia was soon to be confronted with just such a perceived threat.

4.2. EMPERORS ON CAMPAIGN, FROM CARACALLA TO PHILIP THE ARAB

That the third century was a period of intense stress for the structure of the Empire needs no emphasis. But as regards the history of the Near East, certain more specific points need to be underlined: that the presumption that all major campaigns should be led by the Emperor in person was by now well established; that many of these campaigns brought Emperors to the Near East, and to Mesopotamia in particular; and that it was thus in this period that the effects of Severus' conquest of Mesopotamia, profoundly altering the strategic balance of the Empire, first became clear.

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[63] *Dig.* L, 15, 1, 5.

This phase, beginning just after the decisive Roman advance across the Euphrates, ended with a peace imposed on Persia which extended Roman domination across the Tigris. In between came a succession of campaigns, including in the 250s the only major Persian invasions of Roman territory west of the Euphrates before the sixth century. A considerable variety of narrative accounts, in various languages, often written much later, might seem to allow a year-by-year reconstruction of the military history of the area.[1] But the space and effort required would be immense, and the results few and uncertain. What follows, in this chapter and the next, will therefore be, in narrative terms, a mere outline, while attempting to make clear, where possible, the significance of these events both for the evolving structure of the Empire and for the Near East itself. More important, however, it will be based above all on contemporary documents, many only newly available, which for some decades serve to put the sequence of events in a quite different light.

That the Near East was now central to the concerns of Emperors (even indeed crucial to any successful claim to be an Emperor) must have been clear to any observant inhabitant of the Empire. It will at least have been known in Ephesos, where an inscription honouring a man who went on repeated embassies to the Emperors vividly reflects the travels and campaigns of those Emperors in the first two decades of the century. The man honoured had been, on behalf of Ephesos, to the following places: Rome, Britain, Upper Germany, Sirmium, Nicomedia, Antioch and Mesopotamia. The series begins under Severus and Caracalla in 202–208, and ends with successful representations before Macrinus and his son Diadumenianus in Mesopotamia in 217/218.[2] Severus' long campaigns in the East had thus been followed, after a spell in Rome, by his expedition to Britain in 208–211, and then by his son Caracalla's campaigns in Germany in 213. Thereafter his military concerns lay in the Near East. Abundant contemporary evidence makes perfectly clear that Caracalla's imitation of Alexander was no superficial whim but the determining factor in his actions as Emperor. It is surely relevant also to his historic proclamation that the entire population of the Empire should become Roman citizens.[3]

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[1] See now the invaluable collection of sources in translation by M. H. Dodgeon and S. N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (AD 226–363)* (1991). I have not been able to cross-refer to this work in the chapters which follow.

[2] *I. K. Ephesos* III, no. 802 (*SEG* XVII, no. 505).

[3] For Caracalla as Alexander and the relevance of his policy, see most recently K. Bouraselis, Θεῖα Δωρεά. Μελετὲς πάνω στὴν πολιτικὴν τῆς δυναστείας τῶν Σεβηρῶν καὶ τὴν *Constitutio Antoniniana* (1989), 38ff.

Emulation of Alexander is certainly relevant to the fact that in 214 Caracalla took the long-established route to Syria via Asia Minor, passing the winter of 214/215 at Nicomedia, and arriving at Antioch in 215, as it is to his visit to Alexandria in 215/216.[4] But by May of 216 he was back in Antioch; for it was there that he agreed to hear a dispute about the priesthood of the temple of Zeus at Dumayr—the clearest proof of the importance of this temple and of the 'mother-village of the Thelseēnoi' on the road between Damascus and Palmyra. The verbatim report of the hearing, inscribed on the wall of the temple, makes quite clear that advantage had been taken of the Emperor's presence to gain direct access to him, against the normal rules.[5] In a more than superficial sense the Roman state had come to the region and integrated it with itself. Of course not all of the complex features of that integration were distinctive to the Near East. Others, however, were. One possible, but very ambiguous, sign of an integration between Empire and city in this specific region is the appearance under Caracalla, from 214 onwards, and again under Macrinus, of large numbers of silver tetradrachms evidently minted in the Near East and circulating there. But the idea that we can identify a long list of cities—in Mesopotamia, Syria Coele, Syria Phoenice and Syria Palaestina—which were given the honour (or burden?) of producing these large-value silver coins is pure speculation.[6] For it depends on nothing more than resemblances between the images and symbols on the normal (if intermittent) bronze issues of these cities, and those found on this sudden flood of silver coins. But not a single city is actually named on these coins. The only legends on them are the names and titles of the two Emperors, written in Greek. In that sense they do exhibit, like the continuous presence of these two successive Emperors in the Near East, a coming-together of Imperial and regional elements.

On the other hand the fact that all the inhabitants of the Near East were now made Roman citizens was something which they shared with the population of all the other provinces.[7] What was not equally common to all areas was the granting of the status of Roman *colonia*.[8] Caracalla followed his father's grants by giving this status to Antioch itself, and to Emesa, the native city of his mother. Whether it was he or Severus who made Palmyra a *colonia* is not clear. But the grant certainly came no later than his reign, and thereby

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4. For Caracalla's movements see H. Halfmann, *Itinera Principum* (1986), 223–230.

5. See 4.1 above and 9.3 below.

6. For a very over-confident identification of 'the mints' which produced these coins, written before it was demonstrated that the same workshop could and did produce coins for different cities, see A. R. Bellinger, *The Syrian Tetradrachms of Caracalla and Macrinus* (*Numismatic Studies* 3, 1940).

7. See most recently Bouraselis, op. cit. (n.3).

8. See Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 39ff. The meaning of this change in the case of each place will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

not only introduced a radically new constitution, but greatly complicates any analysis of what third-century Palmyra 'was', and of the unique role played by Palmyra in the 260s and 270s. Third-century Palmyra was to be 'Oriental', 'Greek' and 'Roman' all at once.

So also was Edessa in Osrhoene, which on Caracalla's accession in 211 was still the capital of the little kingdom of Abgar. He was probably succeeded by another king Abgar in 211 or 212, and it was therefore probably this Abgar who was summoned by Caracalla in 212 or 213 and deposed, on the grounds that he had been mistreating his subjects in order to force them to adopt Roman customs.[9] If he had, he was in a curious way to be justified after the event. For it is certain that his city, now absorbed into the surrounding province of Osrhoene, also became a Roman *colonia* in 212/213. As will be apparent later, it is possible for us to understand something of the social and cultural context in which this change of status was introduced. But if we think only of the Imperial aspect, the newly conquered territory across the Euphrates was now divided between two provinces, Osrhoene and Mesopotamia; it had two new legions stationed in it; and it contained five Roman *coloniae:* Edessa, Carrhae, Reshaina, Singara and Nisibis.

Caracalla's conception, however, went beyond a revitalisation of Roman imperialism, for his emulation of Alexander extended to ideas of eastern conquest, and to marriage with the daughter of the Parthian king—or rather with the daughter of one of the two claimants, Artabanus V. A campaign in 216 took the Roman forces as far as Arbela beyond the Tigris. The winter of 216/217 may have been spent without returning west of the Euphrates; at any rate it was when travelling between Edessa and Carrhae in April 217 that the Emperor was murdered by a member of his escort, having got off his horse to relieve himself.[10]

This trivial, even absurd, episode was of momentous consequence for the future structure of the Empire. For the first time an Emperor had died while with his troops on campaign, and had been replaced from within his entourage. His successor, reluctantly recognised by the Senate in Rome, was Opellius Macrinus, the Praetorian Prefect, and the first non-senator to become Emperor. His brief reign in 217/218 was spent entirely in the Near East, and may serve to illustrate the progressive detachment of the Imperial structure from its roots in the institutions of the city of Rome. In this case, as with Pescennius Niger, we also see how the role of Emperor could be played in a Syrian context, primarily Antioch; but also, in the very special circumstance of the origins of Caracalla's mother, Iulia Domna, in Emesa, how regional loyalties, partly embracing the army as well, could bring forward a successful rival.

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[9] So Dio LXXVII, 12, 1^a–1^2. For the complex issues involved here see 12.5 below.

[10] Dio LXXVIII, 5, 4.

After his proclamation Macrinus marched back towards Antioch; crossing the Euphrates at Zeugma, he was met by his young son Diadumenianus, brought from Antioch, who was then proclaimed as 'Caesar' by the troops. Once securely in power, Macrinus remained mainly in Antioch, and Herodian offers a description of him holding audiences there, and spending more time than he should have at public shows.[11] In 217, however, there was a campaign in Mesopotamia, for Artabanus demanded a Roman withdrawal, and defeated Macrinus' forces at Nisibis. But peace was then made on payment of a large sum by Rome, and Mesopotamia remained a province.[12]

Macrinus' overthrow came not from any movement at Rome or in one of the other main military regions, but as a direct product of the close relations of the previous Imperial house, and the army, to local society in Syria. The sister-in-law of Septimius Severus, Iulia Maesa, had now returned from court and was living near Emesa as a wealthy landowner. Her two daughters, Iulia Soaemias and Iulia Mamaea, as we have seen, were both married to prominent *equites* who came from cities in Syria: Sextus Varius Marcellus from Apamea and Gessius Marcianus from Arca, also called Caesarea ad Libanum.[13] As we have noted before, this could be seen simply as a characteristic process of the integration of local landowning families into the upper orders of the Imperial system. But the fact that Caracalla's murder took place in the Near East gave more purely local factors a greater importance. For both the sons of these marriages, Varius Avitus Bassianus, born about 203, and his younger cousin, Gessius Alexianus Bassianus, born about 209, served as priests of the cult of Elagabal at Emesa. The problems of the nature of this cult, whose object was the large black stone portrayed on coins of the city, will need to be discussed later.[14] The crucial factor in this instance, however, as in so many other attested cases, was that the soldiers of the legion III Gallica, the only legion in Syria Phoenice, stationed at Raphaneae in the Orontes Valley, frequently visited the city and the temple—and were also said to admire the beauty of the elder boy. Given that, and the claim that he was in reality an illegitimate son of Caracalla, it was easy to persuade them to admit him to the camp and proclaim him Emperor, in May 218. Officially, he assumed at once the name 'M. Aurelius Antoninus', borrowed from the Antonine dynasty, and used also by 'Caracalla'; but posterity was to know him by the nickname borrowed from the name of his deity, 'Elagabal'.[15]

Macrinus' reaction, after some delay, was to move south to Apamea, the major city in that part of the Orontes Valley which belonged to Syria Coele, to proclaim the young Diadumenianus as 'Augustus', and to celebrate the event by distributing money to the soldiers and giving a dinner to the whole population.[16] Once again an apparently trivial detail of narrative history reveals important features of the structure of the Empire. First, as at Antioch, the population of major cities needed to be carefully cultivated. But, more important, the soldiers concerned are described by Dio as 'the Albanioi and the others wintering in this region'. Very considerable forces had been brought by Caracalla for his eastern campaign; legionary detachments from Africa, Pannonia, Raetia and possibly Germany are attested, as well as at least one praetorian cohort.[17] But the significant element is the reference to 'the Albanioi'. For this was a way of referring to the second of the three *legiones Parthicae* formed by Septimius Severus. While legions I and III were stationed in Mesopotamia, II had its base at Alba, south of Rome, and was the first legion of the Imperial period to be stationed in Italy. While the concept of a mobile strategic reserve is perhaps anachronistic, the facts show clearly that this legion did participate repeatedly in distant campaigns under Imperial command.

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[11] So Herodian V, 2, 3–6.

[12] Dio LXXIX, 26, 2–27, 3.

[13] For the family, see 3.4 above.

[14] Herodian's classic description is in V, 3, 2–8. See already ch. 1 above, and further 9.2 below.

[15] Herodian V, 3, 9–12; Dio LXXVIII, 30, 2–33, 1.

More important still, however, recent dismantling of a third-century tower in the city-wall of Apamea has produced large numbers of grave-*stelai* of soldiers of this legion, whose cemetery must have been nearby.[18] The inscriptions now available in fact reflect three separate periods of the presence of this legion at Apamea: 215–218; 231–233 under Severus Alexander; and 242–244 under Gordian III. Moreover, grave-*stelai* of auxiliaries show some of these units there at another crisis-point, 252.[19] It is possible to distinguish those which belong in this first period, for the legion was then entitled 'II Parthica Antoniniana'. It must for instance have been during the legion's initial journey to Syria that one of the soldiers died at Aegeae in Cilicia and was buried at the next stopping-point, Catabolon; but his epitaph was put up by his fellow-soldiers when the legion reached its intended base, Apamea. Another is recorded as having died at Immae, a place on the road between Antioch and Beroea, not far from where a route turns south down the Orontes. This must be a reference to the defeat of Macrinus in June 218 by the forces of 'Elagabal', which Dio says took place near a village in Antiochene territory, 180 stades (about 35 km) from the city.

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[16] Dio LXXVIII, 34, 1–3.

[17] *RE s.v.* "Legio", XII, 1321–1323.

[18] For these important new documents, not yet formally published, see J.-C. Balty, "Apamée (1986): Nouvelles données sur l'armée romaine d'Orient et les raids sassanides du milieu du III^e siècle", *CRAI* (1987), 213; "Apamea in Syria in the Second and Third Centuries AD", *JRS* 78 (1988), 91. A few already known military epitaphs from the site are published in *IGLS* IV, nos. 1357–1362.

[19] 4.3 below.

The new Emperor entered Antioch the next day, and remained there for several months before taking the now established route across Asia Minor to Nicomedia, where he spent the winter of 218/219, and then through the Balkans, to arrive in Rome in July or August of 219. It was five years since a reigning Emperor had been seen there. This time, however, the Emperor's return had a special character, for every effort was made to advertise the exotic and 'Oriental' nature of the cult of his god Elagabal; if it made a deep (and hostile) impression on contemporaries, this was, for modern observers, only to multiply the ambiguities involved in trying to understand religious belief and practice in the Near East. At a less problematic level the interdependence between the elements of the Roman state present in Syria and the different groups within local society had been clearly demonstrated. But if 'Elagabal' could exhibit himself deliberately as an 'Oriental' in Rome, he still followed the practice of Caracalla and Septimius Severus in 'Romanising' cities in the Near East: for it was in his reign that the status of *colonia* was granted to Arca or Caesarea ad Libanum, the home-city of his uncle by marriage, Gessius Marcianus; to Sidon, also in Syria Phoenice; and to Petra in Arabia.[20] By now this was hardly more than a mere title among others. But it was a *Roman* title, with a long history, and these continued grants are thus another sign of the complexity of cultural exchanges in this period.

When an Emperor next reappeared in the Near East, it was in 231, and military relations there had been transformed. For in the 220s the Parthian Empire had been overthrown and replaced by a Persian dynasty from Fars in present-day Iran. The complex background of the establishment in power of Ardashir I need not detain us.[21] What mattered for the provinces of the Roman Near East was, first, his immediate attack on Hatra, and second, his proclaimed ambition to regain the entire territory of the ancient Persian dynasty of the Achaemenids. This new challenge forms part of the deeply pessimistic conclusion of Cassius Dio's *Roman History,* which ends in 229:

> He was indeed a source of fear to us, menacing not only Mesopotamia and Syria, but threatening to regain everything that the ancient Persians had occupied, as far as the Hellenic (i.e. Aegean) sea, as being an ancestral possession. Not that he himself seems so formidable, as that the attitude of our military forces is such that some are liable to go over to him and others are not willing to resist him. For they exhibit such luxury, licence and ill-discipline that those in Mesopotamia dared to kill their governor, Flavius Heracleo.[22]

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[20] Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 50–52.

[21] See R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (1983), 287ff. For the complex narrative sources in various languages, many very late, see Dodgeon and Lieu, op. cit. (n.1), 9ff.

[22] Dio LXXX, 3, 4; see Herodian VI, 2, 1.

There can be no doubt that a profound change in the nature of the situation on the eastern frontier was now felt in Rome. Equally, whatever the content of successive treaties, it is clear that the Sasanid dynasty never accepted the loss of Mesopotamia; hence in the repetitive military history of the next century and a half the same place-names recur again and again, above all Nisibis, Carrhae and Edessa. But there were to be only two occasions, in 252/253 and 260, when Persian forces in fact crossed the Euphrates into Syria. As we will see, even the record of his victories put up by Shapur I, the second Sasanid king, after these invasions makes quite clear that they were simply destructive raids. Though they did extend into eastern Anatolia, even as raids they never approached the Aegean. And even in Roman Mesopotamia itself no secure Persian occupation was ever established until Iovian was forced to give up Nisibis and the eastern part of the Mesopotamian shelf in 363.

The treaty then made had the effect of dividing in two a largely Christian population in which Syriac was the main language of literary expression.[23] But the accentuated rivalry between two empires which began immediately with the accession of Ardashir might have meant something of great importance, a conflict of loyalties for the peoples of the Roman Near East itself. For instance, as speakers of a group of Semitic languages of which related dialects were also used in the Persian Empire, they might have felt the rise of the Sasanid Empire as a source of potential liberation from Rome, as representing a culture or tradition which was more truly theirs. If so, then the events of the 220s would have been of even more profound significance for the history of the region.

These possibilities are raised here only to stress that, so far as our evidence can tell us, the rise of the Sasanids had no such significance, even in Mesopotamia itself, which had been until very recently under Parthian rule. Iranians speaking an Iranian language (Pehlevi, or Middle Persian), the Sasanids ruled a multilingual and multicultural empire just as did the Romans; there is almost nothing to suggest that identification with Persia or its history played any part in the mentality of anyone in the Roman Near East (one set of anecdotes about a pro-Persian from Antioch will be mentioned later).[24] To say that is of course to leave open the question of what part was played by identification with Rome or with Graeco-Roman culture; or indeed the question of whether wider political loyalties, rising above attachment to a city (or, in the Near East, a village), were a significant factor at all.

So far as we can tell, therefore, the rise of Ardashir, and the continuing conflict between Persia and Rome, was of purely military importance. It meant above all that Mesopotamia, and to a lesser extent the Euphrates Valley, became a repeated battleground. That said, only the broadest lines of the very confused sequence of these battles will be set out here; the emphasis will be on changes brought about, and on the occasional items of contemporary evidence which illuminate their consequences.

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[23] See J. B. Segal, "Mesopotamian Communities from Julian to the Rise of Islam", *Proc. Brit. Acad.* (1955), 109.

[24] 4.3 below.

In the 220s Persian forces certainly attacked Hatra and failed to take it, though whether it was then held by Roman or by Parthian forces is not clear. They also invaded Roman Mesopotamia towards 230, but there is no good evidence that they crossed into Syria. As was by now established, the situation demanded the intervention of the Emperor in person. This was now the younger cousin of 'Elagabal', brought up as Gessius Alexianus Bassianus, the son of Gessius Marcianus from Caesarea ad Libanum and Iulia Avita Mamaea from Emesa. As Emperor, after the murder of his cousin in 222, he was officially called M. Aurelius Severus Alexander, thus combining elements drawn from the Antonine and Severan dynasties with the name of Alexander—the only time that it was ever used by a Roman Emperor.

When he marched eastwards, certainly in 231, he took the normal route through the Balkans and Asia Minor to Antioch,[25] which was then his main base for two years. With him came at least part of the legion II Parthica from Alba, now called Parthica Severiana Alexandriana, some of whose soldiers were buried at Apamea.[26] The effects of the Imperial presence were felt widely, as always. Supplies for the army were requisitioned from as far away as Pamphylia, presumably being brought by sea to Seleucia.[27] It was surely also now that Iulia Mamaea sent soldiers from her escort to bring the great Christian scholar Origen (probably already established at Caesarea in Palestine) to expound his faith to her at Antioch.[28] We can assume that Antioch acted, as so often before, as a temporary capital, attracting people from all over the Empire. But the campaigns still allowed the Emperor to visit other parts of Syria, a process vividly reflected in one of the most important documents of Palmyra as a Roman *colonia*. Like other such documents, it is bilingual, in Greek and Palmyrene. As we will see more fully later, Palmyra as a *colonia* had a new constitution, with a pair of chief annual magistrates, called *duumviri* in Latin or *stratēgoi* in Greek. One of these was Iulius Aurelius Zenobius, also called Zabdilas, who may have been the father of Zenobia, and who is described on an honorific inscription from the Great Colonnade as '*stratēgos* of the *colonia* during the presence of the deified Alexander Caesar' ('SṬRṬG LQLNY' BMYTWYT' DY 'LH' 'LKSNDRWS QSR).[29] Severus Alexander seems at least to have intended to visit Egypt (as Caracalla had), and it may have been in that connection that Bostra joined the ranks of Near Eastern *coloniae.* It now become officially 'Colonia Bostra N(ova?) Tr(aiana) A(lexandrina?)' as its coins show, sometimes also calling it by the Greek title 'mētropolis'.[30]

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[25] Herodian VI, 4, 3.

[26] Text to n.19 above.

[27] *AE* (1972), nos. 625–628.

[28] Eusebius, *HE* VI, 21, 3–4.

[29] *CIS* II, no. 3932 = Cantineau, *Inv.* III, no. 22.

The main purpose of Alexander's presence was, however, a counter-attack against Persia.[31] Herodian's vague account makes clear only that the Roman forces were divided into three groups, with one entering Armenia, one going south (apparently down the Euphrates towards its convergence with the Tigris) and one in the centre commanded by the Emperor, evidently operating in the classic battleground of northern Mesopotamia. All that we know for certain is that in 232 the Romans were able to build a road leading from Singara towards Carrhae (so nearly all of Roman Mesopotamia, if lost, must have been regained), and that by 235, the year of Alexander's death, Roman forces were at Hatra, where they still were (or were again) in the first two years of Gordian's reign (238–240), before it was finally taken by Shapur I in about 240.[32] The relatively brief campaign thus seems to have regained whatever territory Rome had lost, and Alexander returned to Rome in 233 to celebrate his victory and then to move to the northern frontier, where he was killed by his own troops at Mainz in 235.

It is possible, as Syncellus records, that the Persians captured Nisibis and Carrhae under Maximinus (235–238),[33] but the first clear evidence of major conflicts breaking out comes from 239. As we have seen, in that year the Persians 'descended' on Dura, perhaps the occasion of the death in battle of the tribune of the XXth cohort of Palmyrenes, Iulius Terentius.[34] But they certainly did not occupy the middle Euphrates, which the new archive from there shows was Roman until the mid-250s.[35] The major conflicts began elsewhere, with the capture of Hatra by Ardashir. For the now famous miniature codex with a text incorporating a later Greek version of Mani's own account of his preaching shows that he dated his call to preach, on April 18/19, 240, as having come in the year in which Ardashir subjugated Hatra, and in which his son Shapur assumed the diadem; the fall of Hatra might thus belong either to 239/240 or to 240/241.[36] With that, so far as we know, a very distinctive local centre, ruled by a line of vassal kings under Parthian suzerainty, renowned for its temple of the Sun, and producing several hundred Aramaic inscriptions, came to an end. At any rate, when Roman forces reached it during their retreat up the Tigris in 363, it was 'an old town located in the middle of the desert, and long since deserted'.[37]

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[30] For the intended visit to Egypt, Halfmann, *Itinera,* 232; Bostra: Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 52.

[31] Herodian VI, 5, 1–6, 6.

[32] See A. Maricq, "Les dernières années d'Hatra", *Syria* 34 (1957), 288.

[33] Syncellus, *Chron.,* 681. For a very detailed account of the events of these years, and the difficult sources for them, see X. Loriot, "Les premières années de la grande crise du III^e siècle: De l'avènement de Maximin le Thrace (275) à la mort de Gordian III (244)", *ANRW* II.2 1975), 657.

[34] 4.1 above.

[35] 4.1 below.

In Roman terms, however, Hatra was only an outpost, even if it deserves some note as the furthest point south-eastward ever continuously occupied by Roman forces. A major conflict did not break out until Ardashir had died, in 241 or 242, and Shapur became sole king, while 242 was the year in which Gordian III (238–244) came to campaign on the eastern front. In the meantime strange transformations had been taking place in Edessa, and must have had some relation to political tensions in Mesopotamia.[38] In 212/213, with the deposition of its king, Edessa had become a *colonia,* and its coin-legends (all in Greek) show that it remained so under the following reigns, though no coins are known from that of Maximinus (235–238). But then, under Gordian III, the city reverts to calling itself by its Syriac name, Orhai ('WRHY), and a king linked directly to the previous dynasty reappears. As he is described in a document from the new archive from the middle Euphrates, he is 'Aelius Septimius Abgar, king, son of Manu PṢGRYB' ('crown-prince'), son of Abgar, king'. The date is December 18, 240, and it is year 2 of the king and year 3 of 'Autokrator Kaisar Markos Antoninos Gordianos' (all transliterated into Syriac). The king's first year was therefore the Seleucid year October 239–September 240, and his second 240/241. But this was not on the face of it a revolt against Rome; for Gordian is mentioned also in the heading of the document, and in any case coins of Edessa/Orhai show 'Abgar the king' *(Abgar basileus)* offering Gordian a statuette. At Edessa alone, among all Roman *coloniae,* there had evidently been a dynasty in waiting since 212/213. The period of twenty-six years is exactly the length of reign which an eighth-century Syriac chronicle gives to a king Manu; but our new Syriac document makes clear that he had not in fact been a reigning king but an 'heir-apparent' or 'crown-prince' (PṢGRYB').

We cannot tell whether the Emperor had actually approved this change or (more likely) had been forced to tolerate a fait accompli. If so, toleration did not last long. For another Syriac document from the same archive shows that by October 242 the king had disappeared, and the local dating is given as year 30 'of the liberation of Antonina Edessa, the renowned Colonia Metropolis Aurelia Alexandria' (DḤRWR' D'NTWNYN' 'DYS' NSYḤT' QLWNY' MṬRPWLS 'WRLY' 'LKSNDRY'), just as it is in the following year (31, that is, April/May 243) in the famous Syriac contract of sale found at Dura. Though Syriac is still used (a notable fact), the place has lost its Syriac name, Orhai, and the king has vanished. We have no evidence as to how these successive transformations occurred; but they must at least suggest that a Roman, or Graeco-Roman, identity was something less well established here than west of the Euphrates. At any rate, the coins show that under Decius (249–251) Edessa still counted as a Roman *colonia,* as also (as shown in documents from the new archive) did Nisibis and Carrhae.

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[36] For the Cologne Mani Codex, containing a Greek version written in the fourth or early fifth century of an original thought to have been in eastern Aramaic, see L. Koenen and C. Römer, *Der kölner Mani-Kodex* (1985), Fr. 18, 1–6. See the translation by R. Cameron and A. J. Dewey, *The Cologne Mani Codex* (1979). See S. N. C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and in Medieval China2* (1992), 37ff.

[37] Ammianus XXV, 8, 5. See 4.1 above.

[38] For what follows see Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 46–50, and more fully 12.5 below and App. C.

Not long after that, however, Roman Mesopotamia was to endure major convulsions, set out for us most clearly in the trilingual record of his victories which Shapur I had carved at Naqsh-e Rustam near Persepolis, the capital of the ancient Persian dynasty.[39] This part of the inscription divides into three sections: a campaign into Babylonia by Gordian III, in 242–244, and his death and replacement by Philip; an invasion of Syria and Cappadocia by Shapur, following on a wrong done by an unnamed Roman Emperor, which, as it now seems, belongs to 252; and an invasion of Roman Mesopotamia by Shapur, evidently in 260, in which Valerian was captured, and after which Persian raids spread into Syria, Cappadocia and Cilicia.

Shapur thus makes no claim to any military operations in Roman Mesopotamia until 260, and (as we will see) no claim any time to have advanced further south up the Orontes than Arethusa. Apart from places along the Euphrates, Syria Phoenice, including Palmyra, as well as Syria Palaestina and Arabia, remained outside these major combats. That is not to say that events, and changes of Emperor, at the centre were not reflected at the furthest corners of the Empire, in the Near East as elsewhere. Thus in June 238, after the accession of Gordian III, a centurion at Sakkaia in the northern Hauran erected a statue, made in the local black basalt, of the 'Great Fortune of Sakkaia', dedicating it 'on behalf of the safety and [victory of our lord?] the Emperor [M. Antonius Gordianus] Augustus'. The name of the Emperor was subsequently erased.[40] For the loyal centurion was not then to know that six years later Gordian would be murdered on the Euphrates, and replaced by Iulius Philippus, who came from a place a short distance from Sakkaia, which then became a splendid new town with the name 'Philippopolis'.

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[39] See A. Maricq, "Res Gestae Divi Saporis", *Syria* 35 (1958), 295; English translation in R. N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (1983), App. 4. The most detailed historical study, on which what follows greatly relies, is E. Kettenhofen, *Die römisch-persischen Kriege des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (1982; henceforward, Kettenhofen, *Kriege*). See also E. Winter, *Die sasanidisch-römischen Friedensverträge des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr.* (1988).

[40] M. Sartre, "Le *dies imperii* de Gordian III: Une inscription inédite de Syrie", *Syria* 61 (1984), 49.

It was in 242 that Gordian III set off on his *expeditio Orientalis;* the term is used on an inscription from Misenum which records the participation of the fleets from Misenum and Ravenna. But the Emperor probably took the normal route through the Balkans and Anatolia to Antioch, again accompanied by at least detachments of the legion II Parthica, once again to be stationed at Apamea.[41] What circumstances then prevailed in the Near East is not certain. We know only that the Persians had raided the Dura area in 239 and taken Hatra in about 240. Given that date, the claim by two Byzantine chronicles that Nisibis and Carrhae had been captured by the Persians under Maximinus (so by 238), and were not retaken by Gordian, must be dubious.[42] At any rate documents of Gordian's reign in the new archive from the middle Euphrates show no interruption of Roman rule there in 239–244;[43] so the Persian raid of 239 had no lasting consequences in that area. Mesopotamia proper, against which the Persians would normally have advanced up the Tigris, is of course another matter. But it is clear that Edessa, or Orhai, both as a restored kingdom in 239/240 and 240/241 (and perhaps 241/242?) and obviously as a re-established *colonia* from 242 onwards recognised the suzerainty of Gordian III; so it was therefore not under Persian control.

It is, however, clear that the first objective of Gordian's campaigns was Mesopotamia, and that a battle took place on Roman provincial territory, near the *colonia* of Reshaina, at which Shapur was defeated.[44] It is thus possible that Nisibis and Carrhae, respectively some 100 km to the east and the west of Reshaina, had been taken by the Persians (but probably after the fall of Hatra), and were now recovered. If so, Singara is likely to have been captured before Nisibis, but may also have been recovered at some point. What is certain is that both Carrhae and Nisibis were functioning as Roman *coloniae* in the reign of Decius (249–251).[45]

Gordian's Mesopotamian campaign must belong to 243, and it was certainly in this year that the influential Praetorian Prefect Timesitheus, his father-in-law—accompanying the Emperor on campaign as a Praetorian Prefect normally did—died and was replaced by M. Iulius Philippus, an equestrian officer or official from the Hauran, whose post before that moment is not known. His brother, C. Iulius Priscus, already held the other of the two posts as Praetorian Prefect.[46] The choice was to have important consequences. For in the following year the Roman forces went over to the offensive and reached close to the heart of Persian territory before being defeated at Misikhe on the Euphrates, over 200 km in a straight line from the nearest Roman outposts on the middle Euphrates, and not far from Ctesiphon on the Tigris. How the army reached there, whether directly from Mesopotamia down the Chabur or from Syria, is not known.

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[41] See Halfmann, *Itinera,* 233–234, and *ILS,* no. 9221. For II Parthica, 4.2 above.

[42] See 4.1 (Dura) and text to n.36 above. The report is, however, accepted in the important new study of this period by D. S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: A Historical Commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* (1990), 189ff. (Henceforward Potter, *Sibylline Oracle.*)

[43] See Feissel and Gascou, "Documents", 557ff., nos. 16 (*circa* AD 239–241, Euphrates region); 14 (AD 241, Appadana); 13 (AD 243, Beth Phouraia); 12 (AD 244, Beth Phouraia).

[44] Ammianus XXIII, 5, 17.

[45] Text to n.52 below.

It is with this campaign and its defeat that Shapur's account of his conflicts with Rome opens:

> When at first we had become established in the Empire, Gordian Caesar raised in all of the Roman Empire a force from the Goth and German realms and marched on Babylonia [Assyria] against the Empire of Iran and against us. On the border of Babylonia at Misikhe, a great 'frontal' battle occurred. Gordian Caesar was killed and the Roman force was destroyed. And the Romans made Philip Caesar. Then Philip Caesar came to us for terms, and to ransom their lives, gave us 500,000 *denars,* and became tributary to us. And for this reason we have renamed Misikhe Peroz-Shapur.[47]

Shapur thus omits the earlier phase of Persian initiative, perhaps because he wants to record only events while he was sole king. He also flatly contradicts the Roman version of the sequence of events which led to the proclamation of Philip as Emperor. For in this version it was only after the Roman army had retreated up the Euphrates to near Circesium that Gordian was assassinated, and Philip took his place.[48] What is certain at least is that a tomb was built for Gordian at a place called Zaitha near Circesium, where Ammianus saw it during Julian's expedition of 363.[49]

This first phase of unsuccessful invasions by both sides was followed, perhaps surprisingly, by several years of peace. Whether or not Shapur is truthful in reporting that Philip acknowledged his suzerainty and made a payment of money as a sign of that, peace evidently was concluded; and Philip departed for Rome, apparently (as usual) via the Balkans.[50] Peace in this area indeed seems to have lasted until 252, and therefore also through the otherwise troubled reign of Decius, who in 251 was to die in battle against the Goths (whether he was the first of all Roman Emperors to die in battle depends on whether Shapur's version or the Roman version of events in 244 is correct).

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[46] *PIR*2 I 461 (Philippus); 484 (Priscus).

[47] See n.39 above; trans. Frye, op. cit. (n.39), 371.

[48] For the very complex narrative traditions, see X. Loriot, op. cit. (n.33 above), 770ff.

[49] Ammianus XXIII, 5, 7.

[50] For a revised chronology see D. E. Trout, "Victoria Redux and the First Year of the Reign of Philip the Arab", *Chiron* 19 (1989), 221.

Our evidence does now allow us to gain some glimpses of this phase of established Roman rule in the Near East. Indeed, slight as this evidence is, it is enough to suggest that, contrary to what one might suppose, we could see this decade as representing the height of overt 'Romanisation' in this region. It was now, for instance, in the reign of Philip 'the Arab', that the last known grants of the status of *colonia* were made. The best-known instance was of course Philippopolis itself, where the grant of colonial status accompanied its foundation as a city. But even the modest little garrison-town of Dura seems by now to have gained this status, as did Damascus and Flavia Neapolis.[51] In Mesopotamia the famous contract of sale found in Dura, dating to 243, expresses in Syriac the colonial character of the town at that moment; while documents from the new archive include, for instance, a contract of sale of 250 from Carrhae—'in Aurelia Carrhae Colonia, Metropolis of Mesopotamia'—another, of 251, refers back to a previous contract made at Nisibis, also in 250—'in Septimia Colonia Metropolis Nesibis'.[52]

The first of the new documents to be fully published also reflects the same status as now enjoyed by Antioch, while shedding a vivid light both on the structure of Roman government in the region and on the limits of its effectiveness.[53] This is the petition *(libellus)* of some villagers from Beth Phouraia, a village owned by the Emperor and situated on the Euphrates in the region of Appadana, itself located, as we have seen, just below the confluence of the Euphrates and the Chabur.[54] The reply 'written under' their petition (hence called *subscriptio,* or in Greek *hypographē*)—and perhaps also the petition itself—had been posted at Antioch in 245: 'In the consulship of the Emperor Caesar Marcus Iulius Philippus Augustus and of Messius Titianus, the 5th day before the Kalends of September, in the year 293 (of Antioch), the 28th of the month Lōos, at Antioch, *colonia* and *mētropolis,* in the Hadrianic Baths'. As elsewhere, the wider structure of the Empire with its usually distant Emperor, his fellow-consul holding office, and even the Roman calendar-system, are all visibly present in the document.

The petition was addressed to the most senior Roman official in the region, Iulius Priscus, the brother of the Emperor, here described as *praefectus (eparchos)* of Mesopotamia, and as 'holding the *hypateia*', an expression which seems to indicate his overall command of the region. That peasants from a village in a remote corner of the Empire could address so high an official in person is a very significant fact. Nonetheless, the outcome from their point of view had been, and was evidently to remain, very disappointing: 'Having, Lord, a dispute with our fellow-villagers over land and other matters, we came up here to seek justice before your Goodness, and having waited eight months . . .'. Even then, however, the case had been only half heard, and they now asked for orders to be given to Claudius Ariston, the *procurator* resident at Appadana, to take immediate steps. The reply was minimal: 'Ariston, *vir egregius,* will examine your petition'. Even so, it is striking that the villagers had felt able to refer to 'the Imperial orders, which you revere', which allowed the current possessors of land in dispute to remain in occupation until the case was settled. A sense of belonging to a wider legal system informs the whole document, however erratic its application might be in practice.

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[51] Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 52–55.

[52] Feissel and Gascou, "Documents", 559, nos. 10 (Carrhae) and 8 (Nisibis). See Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 39.

[53] Feissel and Gascou, "Documents", no. 1.

[54] 4.1 above.

In a different way a sense of belonging to the wider Imperial system is also expressed very clearly by a man from the *colonia* of Heliopolis, L. Trebonius Sossianus, who served as a legionary centurion.[55] In Rome, under Gordian, he made a dedication to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus, '*conservator* of the imperium of our lord, Gordianus'. And a few years later he put up a Latin dedication to Iulius Priscus, the brother of the Emperor Philip, at their place of origin, now a city (and *colonia*) with the name 'Philippopolis' on the north-west tip of the Jebel Hauran, some 80 km south-south-east of Damascus. The sudden creation of an elaborate new Graeco-Roman city, built in the local black basalt and named after the Emperor, was a significant moment in the history of the area, characterised in general by large villages.[56] In the present context it is relevant that Sossianus described Priscus by a title which seems to explain the odd expression *hypateia* in the petition, namely '*Praefectus Praetorio* and *rector Orientis*'. He must mean some overall command of the East, as indeed Zosimus was later to record: 'appointed to rule the provinces there (in the East)'.[57] It should perhaps be noted that this inscription seems to be the first occasion on which 'Oriens' is used to refer to 'the Near East' in the sense employed here.

Zosimus reports that Priscus' rule was oppressive, and both he and Aurelius Victor say that someone called Iotapianus now led a revolt in the East. A few coins with Latin legends and giving Iotapianus Imperial titles are enough to confirm that there really was such a short-lived pretender in Syria. But we know effectively nothing about him.[58] The information would be totally insignificant if it were not for the real importance of other Near Eastern pretenders over the following couple of decades. For the moment, however, far from being in general a period of disturbance in the Near East, the later 240s after the defeat and death of Gordian and the retreat and departure of Philip might be seen as a period of solidly established Roman government and of the celebration of the 'Romanness' of the cities and of the ruling class of the region. Such at any rate might well be the impression given by a statue-base put up at Tyre about this time and inscribed in Greek as follows: 'Septimios Odainathos, *lamprotatos,* Septimia Col(onia) Tyros the *mētropolis*'.[59] The city's self-description, of course, reflects its acquisition of the status of *colonia* under Septimius Severus. The honorand is described as *lamprotatos,* the Greek for *clarissimus,* that is to say, the conventional status-designation of a Roman senator. The person concerned, still apparently no more than another example of a local dignitary who has risen to senatorial rank, is Septimius Odenathus from Palmyra, which itself was now another Roman *colonia.* The date is not certain, but is probably the 240s. If so, the rise to prominence of the family, which was briefly to give Palmyra a quite exceptional role in the Empire, was not long delayed. For by 251 Septimius Airanes (Hairan), the son (as it now seems) of Odenathus, was already a senator himself, and had also gained the position of '*exa*[*rchos?*] of the Palmyrenes' (or 'head of Tadmor' in Palmyrene—RŠ TDMWR). He is honoured as such by a soldier of the legion III Cyrenaica (expressed in Palmyrene as 'who is in the legion at Bostra'—DBLGYWN' DY BṢR), and who calls him his *patronus.*[60] The importance of the family was perhaps beginning to be felt even before the major Persian invasion of 252. Nonetheless, it is now clear that there is no reason to see the prominence of Septimius Odenathus, a Roman senator from a Roman *colonia,* as reflecting the importance of an established 'dynasty' at Palmyra. The wholly exceptional role which the family played was to be a product of very special circumstances, and of the provincial and military structure of the region, and lasted just two decades.

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[55] See Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 34.

[56] See 11.4 below.

[57] *ILS,* no. 9005; Zosimus I, 20, 2.

[58] *PIR*^{2} I, 49. See Potter, *Sibylline Oracle,* esp. 248–249.

That already in 251 Septimius Odenathus' son, Septimius Airanes, had the rank of senator (and hence should in principle have been at least twenty-five) and the position of '*exarchos*(?) of the Palmyrenes' (RŠ TDMWR), and have been honoured by a centurion from another province, suggests a real prominence of the family. As it happens, his father seems to have had the same title, as a newly published inscription of 252 reveals.[61] But what could such a title, held in a Roman *colonia* by a father and son who were both senators, have meant? Is it, as often supposed, a sign of an emerging military command separate from the Roman army proper? Perhaps so. On the other hand the term *exarchos* can be used in Imperial Greek to describe a Roman priesthood.[62] It might seem equally likely that a senator from Palmyra, with his son, who was perhaps really only a boy of senatorial rank *(clarissimus),* held an office of this type in his native *colonia.* Among the functions performed by senators in their native cities, in the Greek East as elsewhere, priesthoods are very prominent.[63] As for RŠ, we will see later that in contemporary Aramaic it could be used in a phrase whose Greek equivalent meant simply 'leading citizen'.[64]

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[59] For the honorific inscription from Tyre, see Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 37, following M. Gawlikowski, "Les princes de Palmyre", *Syria* 62 (1985), 251.

[60] So Gawlikowski, op. cit., 258–260.

[61] Gawlikowski, 257, no. 13.

What was really implied by the two not very common terms *exarchos* and RŠ, neither of which had an established technical meaning, thus cannot be ascertained. Neither can be used to demonstrate an emerging independent military role for Palmyra, a whole decade before our narrative sources suggest any such thing.

The power of established Roman rule in the Near East was, however, also to be felt in quite a different way in these years. For under Decius the question of the worship of the pagan gods became an issue in a way that it had never been before. It was he who in the first winter of his reign (249/250) issued a general order, communicated by *edicta* posted in the provinces, that every inhabitant of the Empire should sacrifice to the gods, and obtain a certificate of having done so. But the very full evidence available for elsewhere for the 'Decian persecution' is matched for the Near East only by a brief report by Eusebius (born about ten years later) of the martyrdom of Alexander, bishop of Jerusalem (formally Aelia Capitolina); of the death in prison of Babylas, bishop of Antioch; and of the prolonged torture suffered by Origen, now long since resident at Caesarea in Syria Palaestina, who died not long after.[65] The lack of evidence is certainly just an accident; for this, the first of the general persecutions, was felt in the Near East as elsewhere. Thus the author of the *XIIIth Sibylline Oracle;* probably from Emesa, and writing his pseudo-prophetic narrative only a few years later, records of Decius' reign: 'immediately there will be spoliation and murder of the faithful'.[66] The impact of Decius' edict, of immense significance as a precursor of what was to come, was unmistakable. But it is important to stress that in military terms the years up to and just after the mid-century were ones of peace and established Roman rule in the Near East, from the Mediterranean to the middle Euphrates and across northern Mesopotamia almost to the Tigris. The next few years would be very different.

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[62] H. J. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions* (1974), 43.

[63] See W. Eck, "Die Präsenz senatorischer Familien in den Städten des Imperium Romanum bis zum späten 3. Jahrhundert", in W. Eck, H. Galsterer and H. Wolff (eds.), *Studien zur antiken Sozialgeschichte* (1980), 283.

[64] 4.3 below.

[65] Eusebius, *HE* VI, 39.

[66] *Sib. Or.* XIII, 87–88, trans. Potter.

4.3. SHAPUR'S INVASIONS AND THE EMPIRE OF PALMYRA, AD 252–273

In 252 the city of Apamea on the Orontes again witnessed a concentration of troops: not on this occasion the legion II Parthica, but mounted auxiliary units transferred there from Pannonia. One was the Ala I Ulpia Contariorum, as we know from the grave-stele of a *signifer* who died there on April 252, the consulship of the Emperors Gallus and Volusianus. Another was the Ala I Flavia Augusta Britannica. At least ten men from these units are now known to have died at Apamea in 252, enough to suggest that major military conflicts had taken place already in that year.[1] This and other items of evidence are enough also to support a re-dating to 252, rather than 253, of the second of the three great conflicts described by Shapur, which will thus have begun in the brief reign of Trebonianus Gallus and his son Volusianus, in 251–253.[2] This is indeed what the narrative of Zosimus claims, while Zonaras relates the invasion to a dispute over Armenia in the same reign.[3] Gallus will thus have been the unnamed (because so short-lived?) Emperor who, according to Shapur, 'again lied and did wrong with regard to Armenia'.

Shapur's account of the battles then fought when he invaded, and the places ravaged, is a priceless document, even if it is not laid out in the sort of geographical sequence which would allow troop-movements to be followed with complete confidence on the map.[4] But the broad lines are certain. First, it is clear that, unusually, the Persian advance was directed up the Euphrates, and was aimed at Syria, not at Roman Mesopotamia. The major battle, at which Shapur claims that a Roman force of sixty thousand was destroyed, took place at Barbalissos, on the Euphrates above its confluence with the Chabur. But then (as seems clear) the king turns to the forts and cities *(kastelloi* and *poleis)* 'which we burned and ravaged and captured'. He begins with Anatha, the island of Ana on the lower-middle Euphrates where there was a

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[1] For the relevant arguments, not repeated here in detail, see J.-C. Balty, "Apamée (1986)", *CRAI* (1987), 228ff., abbreviated in idem, "Apamea in Syria", *JRS* 78 (1988), 102–103. See Zosimus I, 27, 2, and Zonaras XII, 21A.

[2] For Shapur's *Res Gestae,* A. Maricq, *Syria* 35 (1958), 295; trans. R. N. Frye, *History of Ancient Iran* (1984), 371ff.

[3] Zosimus I, 27, 2; Zonaras XII, 21.

[4] For such a map, making as good a reconstruction as is possible, see Kettenhofen, *Kriege,* map 2.

Roman garrison;[5] then BYRT' 'KWPN or 'RWPN, mentioned only in the Parthian text, but surely the same as the small place in the region of Appadana named Bertha Okbanōn in the new archive from the middle Euphrates. Unfortunately we have no exact date for the petition in this archive in which someone from 'Bertha Okbanōn' claims to have fled before the Persians, only to find that someone else had then occupied his vineyard and refused to give it up.[6] Next, in Shapur's account, comes 'Bertha Aspōrakou', surely the district on the Euphrates called Sphōrakēnē, which also appears in the archive.[7] The little places which lay along the middle Euphrates thus begin to emerge into the light.

They had not been Shapur's objective, however, and we cannot even be certain whether the 'Doura' and 'Kourkisiōn' mentioned quite separately in Shapur's list are or are not 'the' Dura and Circesium on the Euphrates. What is clear is that Shapur took first Sura on the Euphrates, then Barbalissos itself, and then advanced into Roman Syria proper, west of the river. The places listed make a clear geographical sequence: Hierapolis, Beroea, Chalcis, Apamea, Raphaneae. The geographical picture then becomes very confused, but the list at any rate includes Antioch and Seleucia, and a sequence of places in northern Syria and Commagene, including Zeugma, Doliche, Germanicia, Nicopolis, Gindarus and Cyrrhus. The invasion thus took the Euphrates route up to the western part of the Fertile Crescent, skirting round the steppe; there is no mention of Palmyra.

As we have seen, however, some Persian forces moved southwards up the Orontes Valley as far as Apamea and Raphaneae. A separate brief list shows that they continued further south, taking three small places between Apamea and Emesa: 'Sinzara' (Larissa), 'Chamath' (Epiphania—'which', as Josephus had said, 'the *epichōrioi* call Hama') and 'Aristē' (Arethusa, which had once been under the *phylarchoi* of the Emesēnoi).[8] No claim is made as to any conquest of Emesa itself. But a combination of items of evidence allows us to accept that in fact the Persian forces did advance on Emesa, and were defeated.[9] The sixth-century chronicler John Malalas records how a priest of Aphrodite from Emesa, called Sampsigeramus, gathered a force of peasants to resist Shapur, engineered his death by a trick and put his army to flight. The story must be at least partly legend, because Shapur did not die. But a closely comparable picture of local resistance to the Persians is given by a contemporary work, the *XIIIth Sibylline Oracle.* Given its pseudo-prophetic character, the narrative is of course in the future tense: 'Then there will be a rout of the Romans; but immediately thereafter a priest will come, the last of all, sent from the sun, appearing from Syria, and he will do everything by craft; the city of the sun will arise, and around her the Persians will endure the terrible threats of Phoenicians'.[10] The anonymous author had by this point moved on to the brief reign as Emperor of Aemilianus in 253, and it is quite possible that the Persian advance up the Orontes took place then. There must in any case be some connection between the resistance led by Sampsigeramus, the role of the priest 'sent from the sun' in leading Phoenicians against the Persians and the series of coins issued by Emesa, in bronze, silver and gold, all apparently in 253, which name a pretender to the position of Emperor: 'Auto(kratōr) Soulp(ikios) Antonōninos Se(bastos)' in Greek, or (in the fullest version) 'L. Iul(ius) Aur(elius) Sulp(icius) Ura(nius) Antoninus' in Latin. But whether this man is to be *identified* with the priest (and whether there is any connection here with Iulia Domna's family, or even with the earlier dynasty of Emesa) is the purest speculation. It does remain significant that local resistance, by a city in Syria Phoenice which was also a Roman *colonia,* did—as it seems impossible to deny—lead to a claim to Imperial rank by a local notable.

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[5] 4.1 above.

[6] See Feissel and Gascou, "Documents", 553. no. 2.

[7] Feissel and Gascou, op. cit., 542–543.

[8] See 2.1 above. For Shapur's allusions to places in this region see Kettenhofen, *Kriege*, 68ff.

[9] For a summary of this evidence, depending essentially on H. R. Baldus, *Uranius Antoninus: Münzprägung and Geschichte* (1971), see Millar, "Empire", 158–159. See now also Potter, *Sibylline Oracle*, 323ff.

Equally mysterious is the representation in the *Oracle* of a Syrian who acted (or, in the pseudo-prophecy, will act) like a brigand in Syria and Cappadocia—apparently under Decius (249–251)—before fleeing back across the Euphrates to join the Parthians. Coming from a contemporary source, this account must reflect some reality; but whether the unnamed figure can be equated with the pro-Persian citizen of Antioch called Mariades or Cyriades who appears in various later accounts as associated with the capture of the city (but which capture?) is again a matter of speculation. The story deserves a mention only to recall the possibility that the Persian challenge to Rome *may* have found some popular support in the Near East. Some lines later, when recounting the reign of Gallus (251–253), the *Oracle* says that 'Syrians joined with Persians will destroy the Romans'. Whether the author means to identify these two episodes is unclear.[11]

More serious is the question of whether it was now or a whole decade later that the independent military role of Palmyra under Odenathus began. The sole evidence that it did begin now is provided by Malalas, continuing his story of the Persian defeat at Emesa: 'There confronted them (as they passed) through the *limes,* fighting on behalf of the Romans, "Enathos", king of the barbarian Saracens, the ruler of the Arabian land, who had a wife, Zenobia by name, the Saracen queen. And Enathos, king of the Saracens, destroyed all the Persians in the forces of Shapur'.[12] Malalas takes this story from a historian called Domninus, adding another account from a different historian, Philostratus, which tallies very closely with Shapur's account of his third campaign (in 260)—except that 'Enathos' kills Shapur. The odds are very strong that both stories belong to 260 and after. There is in any case no documentary evidence that Odenathus took the title of 'king' at any time up to his death in 267; as we will see, it was only posthumously that the Palmyrenes began to call him 'king of kings'. By 257/258, as contemporary documents show, he had advanced only to the purely Roman title of *hypatikos,* literally *consularis,* which *may* mean simply that he was the then governor of Syria Phoenice.[13] The known independent military role of Palmyra was on any interpretation wholly exceptional and striking. But it may be suggested that it came only in the 260s, after even more drastic events than those just mentioned.

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[10] *Or. Sib.* XIII, ll. 150–154, trans. Potter.

[11] *Or. Sib.* XIII, 89–102 and 110–112, with Potter, op. cit., 268ff. and 297–298, who argues for the identification of Mariades, and discusses all the evidence in detail.

What the consequences of this first major Persian raid were, and how soon Roman control was restored and where, are questions which can hardly be answered. Even Dura, where there is a mass of evidence, presents very complex problems. The Persians must at least have marched past it in 252; but the 'Doura' which Shapur claims to have ravaged may or may not be this one. What is certain is that Roman auxiliary forces were still in occupation in late summer 251, when the Cohors II Paphlagonum Galliana Volusiana (named after Gallus and his son Volusianus) was there.[14] It was also in Roman hands in 254, for the latest dated document from the city is a Greek divorce-deed for a soldier of the legion IV Scythica Valeriana Galliena, drawn up 'In the consulship of our lords, the Emperors Valerian (for the second time) and Gallienus, on the day before the Kalends of May [. . .], year 565, in the *Kolōneia* of the Eurōpaioi of [Seleukos] Neikatōr, the sacred, inviolate and autonomous'.[15] Nothing could more emphatically underline both the Hellenistic past and the present Roman status of the city. But it seems from graffiti in Pehlevi that it had in fact been in Persian hands in the early 250s, perhaps 252/253.[16] Its final capture and destruction seems to have come in 256 or 257, hence outside the context of either of the two major invasions recorded by Shapur.[17]

A similar picture of Roman occupation, which must have been interrupted at least briefly by Shapur's invasion of 252/253, is presented by the new archive from the middle Euphrates above Dura. One document records the purchase of a female slave at Beth Phouraia on the Euphrates in June 252, in the consulship of Gallus and Volusianus. The Persian army either had not yet arrived or had already passed by, leaving life to go on as before. At some time after this, but presumably before 256/257 (the destruction of Dura), or perhaps before 260 (Shapur's third invasion), the same purchaser, Abi(d)samtas son of Abidierdos, reappears with the title *bouleutēs* (town-councillor) of Neapolis—in the interval, it seems, Appadana has been formally recognised as a *polis,* perhaps as a reward for loyalty. Abi(d)samtas is addressing a complaint to Iulius Proculus, *praefectus, praepositus praetenturae,* a local military official. But if the deduction that this petition is later than 252 is correct, then this is the latest document from the new archive.[18] And with that our evidence stops, and we hardly hear more of the middle Euphrates until Ammianus' account of Julian's march in 363.

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[12] Malalas 297, ll. 4–10. Cf. also the translation by E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of Malalas* (1986), pp. 162–163.

[13] Text to n.28 below.

[14] *Dura Report* IX.3, 110ff., nos. 971–972; Balty, *CRAI* (1987), 237.

[15] *P. Dura,* no. 32, see ch. 6 and 12.4 below.

[16] So Balty, op. cit., 237–238.

[17] For a vigorous critique of the evidence, arguing against the idea of an initial capture in 253, and for a (final) capture in 257, see D. MacDonald, "Dating the Fall of Dura-Europos", *Historia* 35 (1986), 45.

There is no evidence at all as to the after-effects of the Persian invasion (indeed no evidence as to how long their occupation lasted in the various areas it reached), nor as to the dispositions of the Roman army, or any rearrangement which may have followed. What we do know is that the minting of Imperial coins began again at Antioch in 253/254. Moreover, it is certain that the new Emperor, Valerian, will have arrived in Syria in the course of 254; for on January 18, 255, he wrote a letter from Antioch to the city of Philadelphia in Lydia.[19] Antioch was thus once again serving as an Imperial 'capital'. Syria therefore also had to draw resources from other parts of the Empire: thus in 253–256 we find villages in Egypt taking an oath to the Emperors Valerian and Gallienus (his son) that they will deliver thirty-six ploughing-oxen to Syria, 'wherever it may be commanded'.[20] The broad relevance to army supplies is clear, as is the implication that a need for supplies for more than one year is anticipated. According to Zosimus, Valerian and a newly appointed praetorian prefect also saw to the rebuilding of Antioch, evidently in the mid-250s.[21]

How long Valerian stayed in the Near East is not known. Zosimus' very episodic and abbreviated narrative would suggest that he left only for an abortive campaign into Cappadocia, in the face of Scythian invasions of Asia

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[18] Feissel and Gascou, "Documents", 568, nos. 3–4 (two copies), compared with 559, no. 9 (252).

[19] See Baldus, op. cit. (n.9), 259–261; the letter of Valerian is *SEG* XIII, no. 528. For a good survey of the problem, revealing that the only certain gap in Imperial coin-production at Antioch is in the reign of Aemilianus (253), coinciding perhaps with Shapur's occupation, see K. W. Harl, *Civic Coins and Civic Politics in the Roman East, AD 180–275* (1987), App. 2.

[20] *P. Oxy.* no. 3109.

[21] Zosimus I, 32, 2.

Minor, before returning to Antioch to confront Shapur's invasion of 260. There is indeed no certain proof that Valerian ever left the East in the period from 255 to 260.[22] Hence we may accept that the reply given by Valerian to a lady called Theodora, whose bigamous 'husband' was trying to recover gifts made to her, was indeed issued at Antioch in May 258.[23] It was surely also while Valerian was in Syria that he issued, in the name of himself, his son Gallienus as joint Augustus and his grandson, the 'Caesar' Saloninus, a *subscriptio* about the privileges of the great temple of Zeus of Baetocaece, in the mountain-range behind Arados.[24] The date must be 258–260, and the nominal involvement of the two other Emperors is highly significant. For in these years Gallienus and Saloninus will both have been on campaign in Europe. The 'Tetrarchic' system, of a college of Emperors, each operating in different geographical regions, had already arrived. None of them was in Rome. Valerian's residence in the East will also serve to explain why his instructions to the Senate in Rome about the persecution of 258 came in the form of a letter.[25]

Though, as we have seen, the archaeological evidence suggests that the life of Roman Dura ended abruptly in 256 or 257, this must have been the result of a minor conflict. Shapur claims no campaign between his second, in 252/253, and his third, in 260. So far as our evidence goes, therefore, the second half of the 250s was a period of general peace in the Near East, and of established rule, by the senior Augustus, from Antioch. The mere three martyrdoms which Eusebius can record as having taken place at Caesarea in Palestine under Valerian will have seemed to the pagan majority to represent due order rather than its opposite.[26]

Almost no evidence survives to illuminate the relation of the cities and communities of the Near East to the Roman government in this period; the inscriptions of this area, never as extensive or detailed as those of the Greek cities of Asia Minor, become very few at this time. One exception is provided by the city of Adraa in Arabia, where a series of Greek inscriptions, beginning in the 250s, shows construction of walls and towers by the 'gift' of the Emperor, and supervised by military personnel.[27] A more important exception is provided by Palmyra; and it is only a seeming paradox that the integration of the Palmyrene ruling class into the Imperial system is most clearly displayed—as always, in the form of honorific inscriptions—precisely in the decade before Odenathus led its ascent to independent power. Septimius Odenathus himself, already attested as a Roman senator, appears in 257/258 with the further title *hypatikos.* If we could attach a precise meaning to this term, it would be of crucial significance. But the word, the standard Greek equivalent of *consularis* (a man of ex-consul rank), seems to have come (like *consularis* itself) also to mean 'governor', and by the normal inflation of titles could be used of the governor of a one-legion province like Syria Phoenice, even though he would not be an ex-consul.[28] It is thus possible, but not certain, that when inscriptions from Palmyra in 257/258 call Odenathus *hypatikos* (HPTYK'), he was then the *legatus* of Syria Phoenice.[29] If so, it should be noted that the rule made after the proclamation of Avidius Cassius in 175 had been forgotten, and that he was governing the province from which he himself came.[30] At any rate what is certain is that the title is a Roman one, and that no more is heard of his being *exarchos*(?) or 'head of Tadmor' (RŠ TDMWR), whatever these unusual titles had meant a few years before. One of the four trade-associations which put up honorific inscriptions to him in 257/258 does indeed call him 'master' (*despotēs* in Greek, MRN in Palmyrene); but the other three, in Greek only, use *patrōn,* borrowing the Latin term *patronus.* The inscriptions are thus evidence of a relationship between Odenathus and trade-associations in the city, but not of some overall domination of the city by him.

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[22] Zosimus I, 36. Note, however, J. Reynolds on C. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (1989), no. 1, a fragmentary letter of Valerian and Gallienus apparently written from Cologne.

[23] *Cod. Just.* V, 3, 5, and IX, 9, 18 (extracts from the same text): 'Accepta XV id. Mai. Antiochiae Tusco et Basso conss'.

[24] *IGLS* VII, no. 4001. See 8.3 below.

[25] Cyprian, *Ep.* 80. See G. W. Clarke, *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage* IV (1989), *ad loc.*

[26] Eusebius, *HE* VII, 12.

[27] H.-G. Pflaum, "La fortification de la ville d'Adraha d'Arabie (259–260 à 274–275) d'après les inscriptions récemment découvertes", *Syria* 29 (1952), 307.

Odenathus was not the only Palmyrene to be honoured in Roman terms in this period. In 258/259 Aurelius Vorodes (WRWD), of whom more below, was described as *hippikos* (that is, *eques*) and town-councillor, *bouleutēs* (in Palmyrene transcription HPK' WBYLWT' TDMRY'). For a Roman *colonia* this mélange of languages was of course very distinctive, though no more so than in the *coloniae* of Mesopotamia. But if we take the dated evidence in order, there is still no concrete evidence of any distinctive role on the part of the city, or any status within it on the part of Septimius Odenathus beyond what we would expect of (apparently) the only person from there to rise to high rank in the Roman Senate.

We could thus see the later 250s also as a period of established, or restored, Roman rule in the Near East, marked above all by the almost continuous presence of the senior Augustus. All this, however, was to be violently disturbed by the last of Shapur's three invasions, which led to the capture of Valerian himself in Mesopotamia in 260. We must begin with Shapur's own version:

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[28] Cf., however, B. Rémy, "Ὑπατικοί et *consulares* dans les provinces impériales prétoriennes au II^{e} et III^{e} siècles", *Latomus* 45 (1986), 311, arguing that the title was used only when the person had gained a consulate in absence or been adlected *inter consulares.*

[29] See M. Gawlikowski, "Les princes de Palmyre", *Syria* 62 (1983), 251, and Potter, *Sibylline Oracle,* App. 4, "The Career of Odenathus", an important discussion which takes a different view from that offered here: that Odenathus was not a governor, but did occupy a formal position of dominance at Palmyra.

[30] 3.4 above.

> During the third invasion, when we set out against Carrhae and Edessa and were besieging Carrhae and Edessa, Valerianus Caesar came against us . . . And beyond Carrhae and Edessa there was a great battle between us and Valerianus Caesar and we gained possession of Valerianus Caesar . . . And we burned and devastated and took captives from and conquered the province of Syria and the province of Cilicia and the province of Cappadocia.[31]

The first objective had therefore been western Mesopotamia, and after this there follows a long list of the places ravaged, confirming that the invasion did reach far into Cilicia and Cappadocia. Of places in Syria which are, or may be, mentioned, only Samosata is certain. For the 'Antiochia' which Shapur names is listed along with other small places in Cilicia. If we took this list as our main guide (as in principle we should), we could not be sure if even Carrhae and Edessa (or Nisibis, which is not mentioned) were actually taken; and we might reasonably conclude that the Persian army moved directly westwards from Samosata to Cilicia, and did not enter the central area of northern Syria at all. There is no mention of Zeugma, Cyrrhus, Beroea or Seleucia. For the established notion of a second capture of Antioch, under Valerian, we are entirely dependent on Greek and Latin sources of the fourth century and later.[32]

Even if we accept, as on balance we probably should, that Antioch was captured for a second time in 260, there is no question but that the weight of the Persian invasion was directed against Mesopotamia, and then Commagene, Cilicia and Cappadocia. How the Persian army reached the area of Carrhae and Nisibis is not known (whether by the Euphrates and Chabur, or more probably by the Tigris); nor is there any clear indication of what effects the invasion had in eastern Mesopotamia. If we follow the quite varied details provided in a series of much later narratives (and we have nothing better), it is far from certain even that Edessa was taken. Two Byzantine chroniclers, Georgius Syncellus and Zonaras, record that Roman forces under Callistus

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31. For the *Res Gestae,* see 4.2, n.39. For discussion see again Kettenhofen, *Kriege,* 97ff., and map 3.

32. So Jerome, *Chron.,* ed. Helm, p. 220; Zosimus III, 32, 5 (a later summary of Roman–Parthian/Persian relations, inadvertently making Valerian's campaign a *reaction* to the capture of Antioch); Syncellus, *Chron.* I, p. 715; Zonaras XII, 23 (the fullest account, and the one which corresponds best with Shapur's *Res Gestae*). The question of Antioch is well discussed in Potter, *Sibylline Oracle,* 337ff.

finally mounted an effective counter-attack in Asia Minor, and that Shapur then retreated; and another says that on his retreat Shapur bribed the Roman troops occupying Edessa not to attack his army.[33] The story, like all these accounts, may be fanciful. But it is noteworthy that even Shapur makes no claim actually to have captured Carrhae or Edessa.

Insofar as we can gain any impression of the effects of this last Persian invasion, which left most of the Roman Near East wholly untouched, it is from the equally unreliable accounts of the restoration of Roman power, inextricably confused with narratives of the rise of Odenathus of Palmyra, and his confrontation with two other Roman pretenders, the short-lived Roman Emperors Macrianus and Quietus. The contemporary evidence, apart from a vague and allusive few lines, apparently added on subsequently, at the end of the *XIIIth Sibylline Oracle,* which refer to Valerian, Gallienus and Odenathus,[34] consists almost entirely of honorific inscriptions from Palmyra. The inevitable limitations of such evidence show up all the more clearly when the crucial items expressing Odenathus' role and status turn out, though broadly contemporary, to be posthumous, put up under the much more ambitious rule of his widow Zenobia and his son Vaballathus after 267.

Nonetheless it is possible to set out at least the broad outlines of the history of the Near East in the exceptional period of twelve years, 260–272, during which no recognised Emperor came there; the first was to be Aurelian, leading the campaign which brought about the defeat and reconquest of Palmyra in 272. The aftermath of the capture of Valerian in 260 did lead to a brief usurpation, when Macrianus, a high equestrian official on Valerian's campaigns, proclaimed as Emperors his two sons, Macrianus and Quietus, who reigned in 260/261; they were recognised in Egypt before Macrianus was killed in the Balkans, and Quietus was killed while being besieged by Odenathus in Emesa. No evidence survives to illustrate their rule in the Near East, where they will surely have been recognised in at least some provinces.

Among these provinces Syria Phoenice may or may not have been included. For it is at this point that the independent military role of Palmyra begins. We would of course see it in a quite different light if we could be certain that Odenathus, when described as *hypatikos* in an inscription of 257/258, had in fact been the *legatus* of the province, and even more so if in 260 he still were. In the long list of provinces from which Shapur claims that Valerian's forces in 260 had been drawn, all those of the Near East are included: Syria (Coele), Phoenice, Judaea (as he still calls it), Arabia and Mesopotamia. But whatever legionary detachments or auxiliary units had served under Valerian, it is relevant that Syria Phoenice was the nearest province which had in no way been touched by the invasion, and from which direct routes led across the steppe to the Euphrates, and from there either north to Roman Mesopotamia or south to Babylonia. Active Palmyrene contacts with Babylonia continued until this period. The latest dated 'caravan-inscription' (that is, an honorific inscription for someone involved in the protection of caravans) which actually names a destination in Persian territory, Vologaesias, comes from 247; but there is one of 257/258, and another which seems certainly to belong to the 260s.[35] The dating depends on identifying the honorand, Septim[ius Vorodes]—this part of the name is missing—with an important figure of the 260s, Septimius Vorodes, of whom more later, who may have adopted the name 'Septimius' and be in fact the same as the 'Aurelius Vorodes' whom we saw honoured as a *hippikos* and *bouleutēs* in 258/259.[36] In the inscription (probably) of the 260s he is honoured as a *procurator ducenarius* of the Emperor, as the holder of a long series of city offices and as having 'brought back the caravans *(synodiai)* at his own expense'. He must either have provided an escort or, perhaps equally likely, have paid off potential nomad raiders. We would not know from this inscription that anything at all had changed as regards the integration of the *colonia* of Palmyra into the Roman Empire.

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[33] Syncellus, *Chron.* I, p. 716; Zonaras XII, 23; Petrus Patricius, Fr. 11 (*FHG* IV, p. 187).

[34] *Sib. Or.* XIII, 155–173. See Potter, *Sibylline Oracle,* 151; 328ff.

What is significant in the immediate context, however, is that the Persian military advance up the middle Euphrates does not seem to have stopped the caravan traffic across the steppe (which would always enter Persian, and earlier Parthian, territory at some point); and that whatever forces remained in the western part of Syria Phoenice had not been confronted by a Persian invasion since 252/253. But what is much less clear is how easily any regular Roman units could be, or now were, moved along the routes over the steppe to the Euphrates.

Our greatest problem, which seems at the moment insoluble, is thus to know whether we should see Odenathus' actions in response to Valerian's capture as those of a Roman governor with regular forces on the one hand, or of a local notable with local forces on the other. But even in the latter case it should be recalled that Palmyra was now, and remained, a *colonia* under *duumviri/stratēgoi.*

The initial phase of the rise of Odenathus to a major role in the Near East took the form of a military reaction against the retreating Persian forces and against the usurpation of Macrianus and Quietus, and was followed in 260 or soon after by recognition of Gallienus, who was occupied in Europe throughout his reign, and had no co-Emperor.[37] No clear sequence of events can be established, but we find in our varied narratives that Odenathus besieged Quietus at Emesa, whose people then killed him;[38] that he recovered Mesopotamia, including the cities of Nisibis and Carrhae (if they had really been taken by the Persians, we do not know when); and that at some point his forces advanced as far as Ctesiphon. It would help if we had any conception of the disposition of Roman forces at this time. But we do not, and our highly coloured narratives tend to speak of Odenathus' own forces as being Syrian peasants.[39] What then was the relation of Odenathus, and of Palmyra, to the Roman Empire between 260 and his murder in 267/268? First, the little evidence that we have shows a normal regime in operation in the other provinces of the Near East. At Adraa in Arabia, for instance, towers and walls were built under successive governors in 262/263 and 263/264, using military supervisors, and were dedicated 'on behalf of the safety (and victory) of our lord Imperator Gallienus Augustus'.[40] In Syria Palaestina, even after the general edict of toleration issued by Gallienus, Eusebius reports an isolated but striking case of a martyrdom before the governor, Achaeus; the victim, a centurion named Marinus, was given a magnificent tomb by a local Christian dignitary of senatorial rank named Astyrius.[41] It is patent that this episode belongs in a normal provincial context, governed by a distant Emperor. But in any case we hardly need such incidental evidence. For normal minting at Antioch continued in the name of Gallienus until his death in 268, as it did for Claudius Gothicus until 269. It was in this period, probably in the autumn of 268, that the heretical bishop of Antioch, Paul of Samosata, was finally deposed by a synod which met there. The long-established notion that Paul had been a *protégé* of Zenobia, and had even served as a *ducenarius* under her, has no foundation. On the contrary, one of the misdeeds of which his fellow-bishops accused him was that of behaving in public *like* a *ducenarius*. The point was included in the letters which they sent to Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria, and Maximus, the bishop of Rome.[42] The episode reflects not Palmyrene power, but established Roman rule in Syria Coele.

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[35] Cantineau, *Inv.* III, no. 21 (247); 13 (257/258); 7 (260s).

[36] See above, p. 165.

[37] For treatments of this controversial and uncertain sequence of events see, e.g., F. Millar, "Paul of Samosata, Zenobia and Aurelian: The Church, Local Culture and Political Allegiance

The structure of government in Syria Phoenice would be even more relevant, but on that we have no evidence beyond the narrative detail that Odenathus besieged Quietus in Emesa. For the position of Odenathus himself we

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in Third-Century Syria", *JRS* 61 (1971), 1, on pp. 8ff.; Starcky and Gawlikowski, *Palmyre*, 59ff.; Potter, *Sibylline Oracle*, 341ff. and App. IV.

[38] Petrus Patricius, *FHG* IV, p. 195; Zonaras XII, 24.

[39] So, e.g., Festus, *Brev.* 23: 'collecta Syrorum agrestium manu'; Jerome, *Chron.*, ed. Helm, p. 221: 'collecta agrestium manu'; Orosius, *Hist.* VII, 22, 12: 'collecta agresti manu'.

[40] H.-G. Pflaum, *Syria* 29 (1952), 312–313.

[41] Eusebius, *HE* VII, 13 (edict of toleration); 15–16 (Marinus and Astyrius).

[42] The essential evidence is contained in Eusebius, *HE* VII, 27–30. For the complex arguments involved see Millar, op. cit. (n.37).

are dependent either on repeated statements by the late-fourth-century (and acutely unreliable) *Historia Augusta* that he received the *imperium* of the Orient, or even the title 'Augustus'; on reports by two Byzantine chroniclers that he was made *stratēgos* (general or military commander) of the East;[43] or on contemporary documents. But the only two contemporary documents which record his position, a milestone and a statue-base, both come from the reign of his widow Zenobia and his son Vaballathus, when the entire situation had changed. Both call him retrospectively 'king of kings' (MLK MLK'), while the second, a statue-base dedicated by two Palmyrene generals in 271, calls him also MTQNN' DY MDNḤ' KLH, 'restorer of the whole East'.[44] How this would have been expressed in Latin or Greek is uncertain; nor is it necessarily a reference to an established *position* rather than a laudatory allusion to his victories in the early 260s.

If we cannot trace any clear evolution of the position of Odenathus himself, the inscriptions honouring Septimius Vorodes do at least provide some check. They suggest for instance that, unlike Edessa in 239–241,[45] Palmyra did not cease in the 260s to call itself a Roman *colonia.* This is certainly true of an inscription honouring Vorodes as *epitropos (procurator)* of the Emperor, put up in 262 by a *stratēgos* of the *colonia.*[46] The strongly Roman overtones continue on an inscription of 267, again calling Vorodes *epitropos* of the Emperor, put up by Iulius Aurelius Salmes, who describes himself as 'Roman *eques*'—*hippeus Rōmaiōn,* or HPQ'. Something does change in this period, however, for in this same inscription, and in others, a new official title appears, 'argapet' (*argapetēs* or 'RGBṬ'), a word of Iranian origin taken to mean 'governor (of the city)'.[47] But about this time, in the undated inscription mentioned earlier, Vorodes is also described as 'giver of justice', or 'judge' *(dikeodotēs)* of the *mētrokolōneia.* The hybrid Latin-Greek term has evidently been borrowed from *mētropolis* to indicate a *colonia* of higher standing than others.[48] No dated inscription from Palmyra of 267 or before would lead us to suppose that the city was not still fully integrated in the Imperial system.

However, we need not argue away the clear implications of our sources that a very distinctive and unusual role had been achieved, in the context of at least a relative power-vacuum in the Roman Near East. The clearest sign of this is the fact that both Odenathus' widow Zenobia and his son Vaballathus could rapidly advance to much more exceptional positions following his murder in 267/268, said by one source to have occurred at Emesa.[49]

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[43] So Syncellus, *Chron.* I, p. 716; Zonaras XII, 24.

[44] *CIS* II.3, no. 3971 (milestone); *CIS* II.3, no. 3946 = Cantineau, *Inv.* III, no. 19 (statue-base). I cannot see what conclusions should be drawn from the very fragmentary honorific inscription, *Inv.* III, no. 10, beginning with the words [B]ασιλεῖ βασιλέων.

[45] 4.2 above.

[46] Cantineau, *Inv.* III, no. 10.

[47] Cantineau, *Inv.* III, no. 6 (267); cf. no. 8 (265); no. 9 (264 or 267).

[48] Cantineau, *Inv.* III, no. 7.

But how immediate an acquisition of an exceptional status, and what personal status, is again uncertain. For that we would need evidence datable to the period between 267 and 269 or 270, when a decisive break occurred and Palmyrene forces advanced into neighbouring Roman provinces, possibly first through Arabia to Egypt, and subsequently to Antioch, and from there northwest into Asia Minor. Vaballathus *may* have enjoyed some formal Roman title from the moment of his father's death. But our evidence is either retrospective or not dated. So for instance the undated bilingual inscription on the stone in the form of a milestone mentioned above, from west of Palmyra on the road to Emesa or Damascus, calls Zenobia 'queen' *(basilissa),* and Vaballathus 'king of kings', as well as 'PNRṬ' DY MDNH' KLH—'*epanorthōtes* (transliterated) of the whole East'.[50] The term should be the equivalent of the Latin *corrector*—but this word itself had no precisely defined application. However, the absence of all strictly Imperial titles here does suggest that the inscription dates from before Palmyra's expansion. All our other evidence clearly does come from the period of the geographical extension of Palmyrene power. In Arabia there are milestones in Latin from along Trajan's Via Nova, between Bostra and Philadelphia, recording Vaballathus as (for instance) 'L. Iulius Aurelius Septimius Baballathus Athenodorus, Rex, co(n)s(ul), Imperator, Dux Romanorum'.[51] Another, from the same road, goes in for a fine display of Imperial victory-titles: 'Imp(erator) Caesar L. Iulius Aurelius Septimius Vaballathus Athenodorus, Persicus Maximus, Arabicus Maximus, Adiabenicus Maximus, Pius Felix Au[gustus]'.[52] These inscriptions are enough to indicate beyond doubt that what was now claimed was the position of Roman Emperor, and no co-Emperor is named. But the papyrus documents reflecting Palmyrene rule in Egypt are different: for there Aurelian is named first as Emperor, and Vaballathus follows. So we have texts dated by the second year of Aurelian (272) and the fifth year of Vaballathus: 'Iulius Aurelius Septimius Vaballathus Athenodorus, the most illustrious king, Consul, Imperator, Stratēgos of the Romans'.[53]

Detailed examination of titles will not in reality help us, for they were being made up in an unprecedented and fluid situation. They are enough to suggest that the milestone from west of Palmyra should be relatively early, for no Imperial titles appear on it; that with the expansion from 269/270 onwards Vaballathus began to claim Imperial rank, in a variety of ways; that his public posture was that of co-Emperor with Aurelian; and that eventually 'Augustus', the most distinctive of Imperial names, is used also, as 'Augusta' can be for Zenobia. Palmyrene 'Imperial' coinage struck at Antioch tells the same story: first joint coining in the names of Vaballathus, calling himself 'Re(x), Im(perator), D(ux) R(omanorum)', and of Aurelian; then, at the very last moment, Aurelian's name disappears, and the coins name 'Imp(erator) C(aesar) Vhabalathus *(sic)* Aug(ustus)' and 'Zenobia Augusta'.[54]

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[49] So Zosimus I, 39, 2.

[50] *CIS* II.3, no. 3971.

[51] See Th. Bauzou, "Deux milliaires inédits de Vaballath en Jordanie du Nord", in Freeman and Kennedy, *DRBE,* 1.

[52] *ILS,* no. 8924.

[53] *P. Oxy.,* no. 1264; cf. *BGU,* no. 946. See above all the documents relating to the corn-dole at Oxyrhynchus in the late 260s and early 270s published by J. R. Rea, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* XL (1972); table of datings by Aurelian and Vaballathus on p. 16.

What this brief and violent episode meant for the Near East can hardly now be recovered. A mere few fragments of evidence serve to recall its effects: for instance a temple of Zeus Hammon at Bostra, repaired after being damaged by 'the Palmyrene enemies'.[55] Or, from more than two decades later, there is a subscript of Diocletian and Maximian, addressed to someone called Agrippa in 293, and now preserved in the *Codex Justinianus:* 'Since you say that your freeborn relative, made a captive so to speak during the domination of the Palmyrene faction, has been sold, the governor of the province will see to it that his freeborn status is restored to him'.[56] Otherwise, some features of the situation emerge from the only relatively satisfactory account of Aurelian's reconquest, that by Zosimus, though even here it must be recalled that what we read is part of an overall narrative of Imperial history written in about AD 500.[57]

In Zosimus' account, Aurelian brought his forces along the normal route through Asia Minor, retaking Ancyra and Tyana, and defeated the Palmyrene army near Antioch (other sources add that this was at Immae, precisely where Elagabal's forces had defeated those of Macrinus).[58] Entering Antioch, he published edicts to reassure the population that they would not be punished for having supported Zenobia. His army then marched up the Orontes Valley via Apamea, Larissa and Arethusa, and encountered the Palmyrene forces again at Emesa (geography thus dictated an almost exact repetition of Shapur's invasion in 252/253).[59] Zenobia then retreated to Palmyra, while Aurelian was welcomed at Emesa. The *Historia Augusta* adds at this point an item of great importance, if true: that Aurelian celebrated his victory by worshipping at the temple of Elagabalus at Emesa; and later also, as a memorial of his

[54] H. Seyrig, "Vhabalathus Augustus", *Mélanges Michalowski* (1966), 659.

[55] *IGLS* XIII.1, no. 9107.

[56] *CJ* VII, 14, 4.

[57] Zosimus I, 50–60.

[58] Immae: Festus, *Brev.* 24; Jerome, *Chron.*, ed. Helm, p. 222. See 4.2 above.

[59] Text to nn.8–9 above.

victory, built his well-known temple of the Sun at Rome.[60] Rightly or wrongly, therefore, the author says that the temple of the Sun-God in Rome was a borrowing made by Aurelian from Emesa. Aurelian then advanced to Palmyra, and Zosimus tells a colourful story of Zenobia being placed on a camel and reaching the Euphrates, in the hope of taking refuge with the Persians, before being captured. The city was taken, and a garrison left there. On his way back to Europe Aurelian heard of a renewed uprising in Palmyra, which he returned to suppress. According to Zosimus, the leader of the revolt first tried to persuade Marcellinus, the governor of Mesopotamia, to revolt; if the story has any substance, it suggests that normal Roman government had been restored there also.[61]

What this extraordinary and unparalleled episode meant in terms of the role of Palmyra as between the Empire and Persia, and in terms of its cultural and ethnic identity as a place on the fringes of Greek culture, will need to be discussed later.[62] In strictly military terms, and in terms of the structure of force in the Roman Near East, it is indeed hardly intelligible. For we can discern neither whence the Palmyrenes gained their forces, nor what Roman troops remained either to join or to oppose them, nor how the mass of the civilian population reacted. Nor is there any way of knowing whether the Palmyrenes themselves, the other communities of the Near East or the Roman forces stationed there saw this as a local ethnic movement against Rome or as a breakaway Roman regime reacting to a power vacuum and the Persian invasion. These Persian invasions, however brief, were also quite exceptional. It would not be until the sixth century that Persian forces again crossed the Euphrates. Mesopotamia would be a different matter, and would remain a battleground. But there as elsewhere the military structure of the Roman Near East does not become (relatively) clear again until the Tetrarchic period.

[60] SHA, *Aurel.* 25, 5–6.

[61] Zosimus I, 60, 1.

[62] 9.4 below.

CHAPTER
5

THE TETRARCHY AND CONSTANTINE

5.1. THE TETRARCHY: PERSIAN WARS AND FORTIFIED LINES

For just over a decade after Aurelian's reconquest of Palmyra, we have effectively no evidence at all about the Roman Near East. Almost all that can be offered is a few inscriptions from Arabia, of the 270s and early 280s, showing governors supervising the building of walls and possibly other structures at Adraa and Bostra. But even these are sufficient to illustrate one of the major changes in the structure of the Empire which began step by step in the middle decades of the third century, and were taken much further in the period of the Tetrarchy and Constantine. That is to say, in broad terms, that the Imperial structure moved almost entirely away from its roots in the Republican system, based on the Senate and the holding of major offices by senators. Thus these inscriptions from Arabia show that the governors, who had previously been senators of ex-praetor rank, *legati Augusti pro praetore,* were now men of equestrian rank with the title *praeses* (*hēgemōn* in Greek).[1] What we call the late Empire is already coming into being.

Beyond that, in the Tetrarchic period, from 284 onwards, there came rearrangements of provincial boundaries; a new taxation-system; what seems to have been a more active and positive attitude on the part of government (reflected in this period in a long series of boundary-decisions in the name of the Emperor); the appearance of a new tier of regional government, the twelve

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[1] *SEG* XVI, nos. 813–814 (274/275, Adraa), Flavius Aelianus, *praeses*—ἡ(γεμόνος); *IGLS* XIII.1, no. 9108 (278/279, Bostra), Aur. Petrus, τοῦ δια[σημοτάτου ἡμῶν] ἡγεμ(όνος); 9109 (282/283, Bostra), Aemilius Aemilianus, *hēgemōn.*

'dioceses', each embracing a number of provinces; and above all the formalisation of the geographical division of the Empire between (eventually) four Emperors: two senior *Augusti* and two *Caesares*. It was within that framework that the repeated role of Antioch as an Imperial residence was in effect transformed into that of a regular capital. It was also in this period, in 298/299, that a treaty with Persia gave the Empire in the Near East its greatest-ever extension, to and apparently across the Tigris. Moreover, virtually all along the zone between the settled area and the steppe literary evidence, inscriptions and the physical remains of Roman forts and roads combine to provide the most detailed picture we have for any period of a Roman 'desert frontier'.

It was perhaps merely an accident that the much more active and interventionist attitude of the state in this period was to be expressed also in the form of the last great persecution of Christians—and then, after the conversion of Constantine in 312, by equally active support of Christianity and vigorous Imperial efforts to enforce unity in the Church. This transformation of internal structures, and then the later phase, after 312, will need separate treatment. But, both for the military aspect (which will come first) and for these others, it is of profound significance for our understanding that we can again rely on the view provided by a contemporary, Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, who was born soon after 260 and died in 339.[2] Unlike Josephus, the last 'native' of this region on whom we could depend for a connected narrative of events and an understanding of them from within, Eusebius remained resident there throughout the entire period. Our best narrative evidence for the entire half-century of the Tetrarchy and Constantine thus comes from a Near Eastern perspective. Eusebius' narratives, in the later books (VIII–X) of his *Ecclesiastical History,* in the *Martyrs of Palestine* and in *On the Life of the Blessed Constantine,* all show us events unfolding as they were seen from the viewpoint of Caesarea in Palestine. His *Onomasticon,* a work on place-names in the Bible, also happens to give a priceless snapshot of social structures and military dispositions as they were in these same places towards the end of the third century.[3] It is from this work, and this alone, that we know that the legion X Fretensis (or at least a detachment of it) had already moved down from Jerusalem to its new station at Aila at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba: 'Ailam: on the borders (of Palestine), lying next to the southern desert and the Red Sea which is next to it, sailed by both those crossing from Egypt and those from India. Stationed there is the Tenth legion *(tagma)* of the Romans.

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[2] For Eusebius, I depend throughout on T. D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (1981).

[3] For the work and its date see Barnes, op. cit., 106ff. The question of the date is controversial, but I believe Barnes's early dating to be correct. The strongest argument for such a date is the absence of any reflection of established Christianity.

It is now called Aila'.[4] This region, as we will see later, was now part of 'Syria Palaestina', not as before 'Arabia'; and Trajan's construction of his Via Nova had been followed at last by a large-scale military investment. The fact that we have this information, from this date, is in a sense accidental. But a writer from outside the region, however interested in Biblical sites, might not have been able to add this detail. Moreover, a focus on Biblical sites was a relatively new feature of Christianity in this period, and was to be reinforced on a vast scale by Constantine. In these senses, important enough, the fact that Eusebius' perspective on his time is a regional one is more than just an accident of biography. But whether there is more to it than that, whether he or anyone else represents a distinctive 'Syrian' Christianity, is quite another matter.[5] If that issue is more complex than it may seem, we do have unambiguously regional perspectives on the Tetrarchic Empire from rabbinic writings on the one hand,[6] and from Syriac martyr-acts, narrating martyrdoms in Edessa, on the other.[7] With the ever deeper implantation of the Roman state in the Near East, it and the world of rabbinic learning could come into very close contact. Witness the rabbinic ruling that a *cohen* who incurred defilement (through contact with a corpse) could be excused because he had walked over graves in order to see the Emperor Diocletian at Tyre.[8]

Diocletian had become Emperor in circumstances which were of great significance as illustrating the continued relevance of Roman imperialism in this region, and the importance of the Near East as a military zone. For he had been in the entourage of the Emperor Carus and his son Numerianus on their campaign into the heart of the Persian Empire in 283, when both Ctesiphon and Seleucia on the Tigris were captured.[9] Carus seems to have died there, and by March 284 Numerianus may have been back in Syria, at Emesa.[10] But after that he took his forces on the established route across Asia Minor. It must have been on that journey that he was murdered, and his death then concealed during several days' march. For it is certain that it was at

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[4] Eusebius, *Onom.*, ed. Klostermann, p. 6. It was to be there throughout the fourth century, see *Not. Dign., Or.* XXXIV, 30: 'Praefectus legionis decimae Fretensis, Ailae' (under the Dux Palaestinae).

[5] See 13.1 below.

[6] See esp. S. Lieberman, "Palestine in the Third and Fourth Centuries", *JQR* 36 (1945–46), 329; 37 (1946–47), 31 (both, however, highly speculative).

[7] See 12.6 below.

[8] *Jerusalem Talmud, Berachoth* 3, 1 (trans. M. Schwab, *Le Talmud de Jérusalem* I [1871], 58; trans. ed. J. Neusner, *Talmud of the Land of Israel* I [1989], 119). For the impact of Diocletian's visit here, as reflected in the Talmud, see now also J. C. Greenfield, "An Aramaic Inscription from Tyre from the Reign of Diocletian Preserved in the Palestinian Talmud", *Atti* II. *Cong. Int. Studi Fenici e Punici* II (1991), 499.

[9] SHA, *Car.* 8, 1; Zonaras XII, 30. See Halfmann, *Itinera*, 242.

[10] So *CJ* V, 52, 2 (but in the names of Carus, Carinus—his other son—and Numerianus).

Nicomedia, on November 20, 284, that Diocles, an equestrian officer, was proclaimed Emperor, subsequently taking the name 'Imperator Caesar C. Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus'.

It was he who inaugurated the Tetrarchic system, taking first a 'Caesar' and then a co-'Augustus', Maximian, and subsequently in 293, two junior 'Caesares', Constantius (the father of Constantine), who reigned in the West under Maximian, and Galerius, who was active in the East under Diocletian himself. The fact that the senior Augustus took the East as his area is itself a clear indication of the way that strategic priorities had become established. But 'the East' in this sense means the whole eastern half of the Empire, up to the Danube. In 287 Diocletian achieved some sort of submission from the Persians, involving the sending of gifts, including animals; but whether he himself was actually then on campaign in the Near East is not certain. It is not until 290 that he can be shown for certain to have been in Syria, issuing rulings in May from Antioch, from Emesa to the *praeses* of Syria (Phoenice) and probably from Laodicea. More important, a panegyrist, addressing Maximian at Trier in 291, alludes briefly to a recent victory over 'the Saracen'—as it seems, the first occasion on which this word was ever used to describe a defeated Imperial enemy: 'I pass over the Saracen oppressed by the shackles of captivity'. He clearly means to speak of peoples living near Roman Syria, for later he makes another allusion: 'that laurel (won) from the conquered *nationes* bordering Syria'.[11] The speaker probably had even less of an idea than we as to where precisely these *Saraceni* might have been located. Like all such terms, it could be used of peoples who might be found anywhere from Mesopotamia to Aila on the Red Sea. But, given Diocletian's movements and the extensive military investment in what was to be called the Strata Diocletiana, running from the Hauran to Damascus and then through Palmyra to the Euphrates,[12] it was probably in that area, hence in Syria Phoenice or the northern part of Arabia, that the action took place. One of the very last old-style senatorial *legati Augusti pro praetore* of the province of Syria Phoenice is found making a Latin dedication at Heliopolis about this time to Diocletian as 'the liberator of the Roman world, the bravest and most dutiful and most unconquered'.[13]

During this period the Persian front was quiescent, and it was not until perhaps 295, and more certainly from 296 onwards, that major campaigns began again.[14] In brief, Galerius was first defeated by the Persian king Narses in a battle in Mesopotamia ('between Callinicum and Carrhae', so apparently somewhere on the river Balikh). In 297 he collected new forces from the Balkans, and in 298 fought a successful campaign further north, in Armenia, and then marched south along the Tigris as far as Ctesiphon (once again), finally returning by the route up the Euphrates. According to Ammianus, when Julian's forces reached the fortified post of Anatha (now Persian) in 363, they found among the captives a Roman soldier left behind during Galerius' retreat; the implication is clearly that the invasion had not served to reimpose Roman control on the lower-middle Euphrates.[15] Diocletian's occupation of the Euphrates stopped at Circesium, at its confluence with the Chabur.[16]

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[11] Barnes, *New Empire,* 51. *Pan.* III (11), ed. Galletier, 5, 4; 7, 1.

[12] Text to nn.22ff. below.

[13] *IGLS* VI, no. 2771.

[14] For the complex issues of Imperial chronology in this period see T. D. Barnes, "Imperial Campaigns, AD 285–311", *Phoenix* 30 (1976), 174.

The major consequence of this victory was the recapture of Nisibis (though how long it had been lost seems quite unclear). More important still were the terms of the peace now imposed on Narses, and the role of Nisibis as expressed in them. It was either in 298 or 299 that Diocletian joined Galerius there and sent an envoy to Narses to dictate terms. Five districts, described as Intelene, Sophene, Arzanene, Carduene and Zabdikene, were to be held by the Romans, while the Tigris would be the frontier between the two empires.[17] What this means is far from clear, for these districts lie largely on the far bank of the Tigris; it is possible that in this zone across the river Rome now gained some recognised hegemony, without military occupation. What is important, however, is that the treaty led to a firm Roman occupation of a region to the north-east of the existing province of Mesopotamia, along the upper-middle Tigris, where it flows first eastwards behind the Mons Masius (the Tur Abdin) and then south-east to enter the Mesopotamian plain. This stretch would (at least within a few decades) contain the major Roman strongholds of Amida (Diyarbakir) and Bezabde.[18] Although reports of this treaty speak of Rome gaining regions 'across the Tigris',[19] it seems clear that it was in fact on the right bank of the river that the Roman defences would be built. There was thus a real extension of Roman military occupation to the Tigris, and one in which a heavy investment would be made. In geographical terms it was not large; but this advance into a remote and little-known area along the Tigris deserves some attention. For it was yet another step in the continuing forward movement of Roman forces, which in the Near East was to last beyond our period. This particular advance could be seen as the preliminary to the partition of Armenia, directly across the river, in 387; in the Roman part of Armenia major fortifications were still being undertaken in the sixth century.[20]

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[15] Ammianus XXIV, 1, 10.

[16] Text to n.25 below.

[17] Petrus Patricius, Fr. 14 (*FHG* IV, p. 189). See E. Winter, "On the Regulation of the Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire in 298", in D. H. French and C. S. Lightfoot (eds.), *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire* II (1989), 555.

[18] For this area see the illuminating discussion by J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (1989), 41ff.

[19] Festus, *Brev.* 25: 'Persae ... Mesopotamiam cum Transtigritanis regionibus reddiderunt'.

The provisions relating to Nisibis were also of great significance. In spite of reported objections by Narses, it was laid down that commercial exchanges between the two empires would take place there. For over sixty years, until it was surrendered after Julian's campaign in 363, Nisibis was to be the commercial and military centre of the eastern part of Roman Mesopotamia. Like Edessa, it was also to be one of the major centres of Christian Syriac literature. The greatest of all Syriac writers, Ephrem, was born there a few years after the treaty, and left it only when it was abandoned to the Persians in 363.

Diocletian seems to have been based largely in Antioch in the years 300–302, with a journey to Egypt, on which he travelled through Palestine, and Eusebius for the first time set eyes on the young Constantine, who was in the Emperor's entourage.[21] In 302 Diocletian returned to his main capital, Nicomedia, where the great persecution was instituted in February 303. In 305, with the abdication of Diocletian and Maximian, Galerius became the 'Augustus' of the eastern half of the Empire, resident mainly in the Balkan peninsula, while his nephew (C. Galerius Valerius) Maximinus became the 'Caesar', then being proclaimed 'Augustus' by his troops in 310. As was noted before, his rule between 305 and 311 represents a notable phase in the integration of the Near East into the Imperial system. For he was resident there continuously throughout that period, perhaps primarily at Antioch, but also on occasion at Caesarea in Palestine. The military history of these years, if there was one, is entirely unknown, though a victory against the Persians is celebrated in 310. With the death of Galerius in 311, a quite new phase opened, and Maximinus moved rapidly to secure Nicomedia, returning to Antioch in 312, when a campaign was fought, for unknown reasons, in Armenia. In 313 he returned to the Balkans, was defeated by Licinius, then the 'Augustus' of that area, and committed suicide after retreating to Tarsos. With that again a new phase opens. But the years 311 and 312 are chiefly notable as the last phase of active persecution of the Christians, renewed even after Galerius' deathbed edict of toleration

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20. See J. D. Howard-Johnston, "Procopius, Roman Defences North of the Taurus and the New Fortress of Citharizon", in D. H. French and C. S. Lighfoot (eds.), *The Eastern Frontier of the Roman Empire* II (1989), 203.

21. Eusebius, *VC* I, 19; Barnes, *New Empire,* 55.

in 311. How this phase worked out is closely bound up with the interplay of relations between the emperor and the still pagan communities of the Near East, the city of Antioch above all. Before that it will be necessary to look at how the Empire in the Near East, viewed as a military structure, had developed over the previous three decades.

Later writers were in no doubt that the reign of Diocletian had seen a massive programme of fortification all along the frontiers, including particularly the eastern one.[22] To Zosimus, writing in about AD 500, this was a valuable measure, subsequently undone by Constantine: 'For, as the Roman Empire, everywhere along its frontiers, had by the foresight of Diocletian . . . been equipped with cities and forts and towers, and the whole army was stationed there, passage into it was impossible for the barbarians'.[23] Malalas, writing some decades later, sums up the implementation of this on the eastern frontier: 'Diocletian also built fortresses on the *limes* from Egypt to the Persian borders, and stationed *limitanei* in them, and he appointed *duces* for each province, to be stationed further back from the fortresses with a large force to ensure their security'.[24] What Malalas says is partly anachronistic (the term *limitanei* for frontier troops belongs later, and *duces* were not yet to be found in each province), and partly contradicts the general thrust of Zosimus' conception. Nonetheless they both share the impression of a major phase of fortification-building. It is more significant that the same view is shared by a much better qualified observer, Ammianus Marcellinus, who was born towards 330 in Antioch and served on the eastern frontier in the 350s and 360s. To him, Diocletian's fortification of the small town of Circesium, on the Euphrates, was part of a wider policy:

> The Emperor (Julian) marched at quick step to Cercusium, a very safe and skilfully built fortress, whose walls are washed by the Abora (Chabur) and Euphrates rivers, which form a kind of island . . . This place, which was formerly small and exposed to dangers, Diocletian, alarmed by a recent experience (one of the Persian invasions of the mid-third century), encircled with walls and lofty towers, at the time when he was arranging the inner lines of defence on the very frontiers of the barbarians, in order to prevent the Persians from overrunning Syria.[25]

The expression 'the inner lines of defence' *(interiores limites)* should not be taken to imply the idea of a double line of frontier installations, outer and inner. It means 'the border-districts further inland'.[26] But Ammianus' conception of the importance of a fortified frontier, in this case directed to defence against Persia, is quite clear. Similar defences, in Ammianus' view, were needed also against other neighbours: so he describes Arabia as filled with strong camps *(castra)* and forts *(castella)* 'for repelling the raids of neighbouring *gentes*', and as containing major cities—Bostra, Gerasa and Philadelphia—all defended by mighty walls.[27]

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[22] For what follows see the classic work of D. van Berchem, *L'armée de Dioclétien et la réforme constantinienne* (1952), esp. 3ff., and the useful recent survey by A. Lewin, "Dall' Eufrate al Mar Rosso: Diocleziano, l'esercito e i confini tardo-antichi", *Athenaeum* 78 (1990), 141.

[23] Zosimus I, 34, 1.

[24] Malalas 308, trans. E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys, and M. Scott.

[25] Ammianus XXIII, 5, 1–2, Loeb trans.

It is quite likely that this work of fortification went on in the early fourth century along the newly acquired stretch of the Tigris, at Nisibis after its recapture and at Singara, where two of the now smaller late-Roman legions, the I Flavia and (still) the I Parthica, were stationed in 363.[28] But there is no precise evidence until later, under Constantine. Nor can any Roman forts of this period be securely identified anywhere along the Chabur River. But the area where there is ample evidence to illustrate the validity of later views of Diocletian's activity is along the line from the Euphrates at Sura across the steppe to Palmyra and Damascus, and then south to Aila on the Gulf of Aqaba: 'from Egypt to the Persian frontier', as Malalas said.

In relation to that line Circesium itself was an outpost, some 150 km down the river. There must presumably have been some Roman forts along this stretch, over which Julian's forces marched in 363, that is to say, between Callinicum, which Ammianus calls 'a strong fortress and most welcome because of the wealth of supplies on sale', at the confluence with the Balikh, and Circesium, at the confluence with the Chabur. But even Ammianus, who was there, says nothing of this area. The great fortress of Zenobia (Halebiyeh) on the right bank, 50 km above Circesium, was built only later, by Justinian.[29] But Procopius may well be right in saying that Diocletian built three forts in this region, including one called Mambri, not far from Zenobia (which he thought had been built by Zenobia of Palmyra, and then abandoned).[30] In effect, however, the military and social history of this stretch of the river, briefly illuminated by the new documents of the 230s to 250s, remains, for this period, wholly obscure.

By contrast, the route across the steppe from Sura towards Damascus, lined with forts, is very well known. The legion XVI Flavia Firma, or a section of it, may already have been at Sura, where the route left the Euphrates, and the IV Scythica (or a section) at Oresa (Tayibeh), where they are listed by the

[26] See B. Isaac, "The Meaning of the Terms *limes* and *limitanei*", *JRS* 78 (1988), 125.

[27] Ammianus XIV, 8, 13.

[28] Ammianus XX, 6.

[29] For the fortress, and this stretch of the Euphrates, see J. Lauffray, *Halabiyya-Zenobia: Place forte du limes oriental et la Haute-Mésopotamie au VIe siècle* I (1983), with the excellent map in fig. 1.

[30] Procopius, *Aed.* II, 8, 7–8. On this piece of historical fiction see further 11.5 below.

late-fourth-century *Notitia Dignitatum.* Documentary evidence of the early fourth century suggests that the legion I Illyricorum was already at Palmyra, and confirms that the III Gallica was at Danaba between Palmyra and Damascus, the stations where the *Notitia* locates them.[31]

Few places show the impact of Tetrarchic military occupation more vividly than Palmyra. The reconquest by Aurelian had not meant the destruction of the city, though it was reduced in size. A new, much more restricted circuit of city-walls seems to date from this period. At least some of its major temples remained, as the great temple of Bel with its *temenos* still does. So apparently did the temple of Baalshamin. For a Greek inscription of AD 302 from there shows (once again) a Roman soldier making a dedication to a local deity; but Baalshamin had become a colourless 'Zeus the Highest who listens' (*Zeus Hypsistos* and *Epēkoos*).[32] The temple of Allat, however, at the far end of the Great Colonnade from the temple of Bel, was enveloped in a complex of Roman military headquarters buildings which rose up a hill on the west of the city, looked directly across to the temple of Bel and was surrounded by an angle of the new wall.[33] At the highest point lay the *principia,* facing down the *via praetoria,* crossed by the *via principalis.* The complex was clearly designed as a whole, and was built in the Tetrarchic period, between 293 and 305. For within the *principia* the highest, and focal, point of the whole ensemble is formed by the 'temple of the standards', on whose lintel a Latin inscription proudly proclaimed the completion of the work: 'The Repairers of their world and Propagators of the human race, our Lords Diocletianus and Maximianus, the most unconquered Imperatores, and Constantius and Maximianus (*i.e.,* Galerius), the most noble Caesares, have successfully founded the camp *(castra),* under the care of Sossianus Hierocles, *vir perfectissimus,* governor *(praeses)* of the province, devoted to their *numen* and *maiestas*'.[34] No other document expresses more perfectly the triumphalism of the Tetrarchic period, when in the East the Roman Empire had just reached its greatest-ever extent.

The builders evidently conceived of the whole complex as belonging to the category of *castra,* conventionally translated 'camp' (hence these structures are often called the camp of Diocletian). But whether the forces now in Palmyra were all quartered there or were lodged in the city is not clear. Strictly speaking, our only documentary evidence to suggest that the Legio I Illyricorum was already stationed there is inscriptions recording detachments of it and the III Gallica operating jointly in Egypt in 315/316 and 322/323.[35] But we do not know how large a 'legion' of this period was. There can hardly have been less than a thousand men in any case, and it most likely that the *castra* really functioned as a headquarters, while the soldiers lived in the city. The activities of the *praeses,* Sossianus Hierocles, and the names of the Tetrarchs were evident there too. For in the same period a Greek inscription records that the Diocletianic Bath *(Dioklētianon Balanion)* was completed by Hierocles 'for the safety and victory of our lords the Emperors and Caesars'; the reference seems in fact to be to a portico, with columns of Egyptian red granite, fronting on the Great Colonnade.[36]

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[31] *Not. Dign., Or.* XXXIII, 23: 'Praefectus legionis quartae Scythicae, Oresa'; 28: 'Praefectus legionis sextaedecimae Flaviae Firmae, Sura'; XXXII, 30–31: 'Praefectus legionis primae Illyricorum, Palmira; Praefectus legionis tertiae Gallicae, Danaba'. From Herodian V, 3, 9, it is clear that the III Gallica had been moved from Raphaneae before 238, and it may have been one of the legions moved by Severus Alexander 'to locations more suitable for preventing the raids by barbarians', so Herodian VI, 4, 7. *CIL* III, no. 755 (Nicopolis), of the late third or early fourth century, shows that the legion was already at Danaba.

[32] C. Dunant, *Le sanctuaire de Baalshamin à Palmyre* III, *Les inscriptions* (1971), no. 31.

[33] See M. Gawlikowski, *Palmyre* VIII, *Les principia de Dioclétien, 'Temple des Enseignes'* (1984), esp. 62ff.

[34] *CIL* III, no. 6661 = Cantineau, *Inv.* VI, no. 2.

It is not necessary to survey all of the remarkable line of forts which now marked the route from the Euphrates at Sura to Damascus.[37] Suffice it to emphasise that the term 'Strata Diocletiana' appears on milestones from a series of stretches of the road: between the Euphrates and Palmyra, between Palmyra and Damascus, and on the branch which left the road near Dumayr and ran south along the edge of the steppe, passing along the east side of the Jebel Hauran and (as we will see) joining the route to Azraq and then Jawf (Dumatha) beyond the end of the Wadi Sirhan.[38] What matters is not whether we can date when a road, or route, came into use (which we cannot), but the conception, clearly visible in the documents, of a unified system named after the Emperor, a conception which necessarily imposed itself on any user of the road.

The route was lined with a whole series of forts, of which some are still standing and others visible on aerial photographs. So far as can be determined, none of them has produced a dated building-inscription. But their Roman character, and their connection with the Strata Diocletiana, is beyond doubt. The best preserved, Khan al Hallabat, a small fort of some 47 m square with corner towers, 31 km south-east of Palmyra, is likely to be the place called Veriaraca which is named on one of the milestones, and which appears in the *Notitia Dignitatum* as the station of the Ala Nova Diocletiana.[39] It would be carrying scholarly caution too far not to see all this as an integrated system of the Tetrarchic period. But to say that implies that we have extensive evidence of a set of physical structures stretching through the steppe, not that we understand exactly how it was intended to work, or whether it in fact did achieve its purpose.

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[35] See *ILS,* no. 8882, and Gawlikowski, op. cit., 63.

[36] H. Seyrig, *Syria* 12 (1931), 321, no. 4. See H. Dodge, "Palmyra and the Roman Marble Trade: Evidence from the Baths of Diocletian", *Levant* 20 (1988), 215.

[37] See R. Mouterde, "La Strata Diocletiana et ses bornes milliaires", *MUSJ* 15 (1930), 221 and 339; M. Dunand, "A propos de la Strata Diocletiana", *RB* 40 (1933), 227 and 529; A. Poidebard, *La trace de Rome dans le Désert de Syrie* I–II (1934); van Berchem, op. cit. (n.22 above); Kennedy and Riley, *RDF,* passim.

[38] From north of Palmyra, e.g., *CIL* III, no. 6179: 'strata Diocletiana a Palmyra Aracha'; from Palmyra-Damascus, e.g., *MUSJ* 15 (1930), 226, nos. 7–8. From the branch-road towards Azraq, e.g., *AE* (1931), no. 101 (near Sa'neh). See Th. Bauzou in Dentzer, *Hauran* I.2, p. 153 (and map on p. 138).

A glance at the map would suggest that if protection against Saracens from the steppe were the objective of this system, Damascus should have been its focus, both from its central position along the Strata Diocletiana and because it was the major city most exposed to the steppe zone. In fact, as earlier, the nature of the Roman military presence in Damascus and its region remains a mystery. Malalas, supported by the *Notitia,* states that Diocletian established an arms-factory there, 'having in mind the raids of the Saracens'. Modern studies of the city also tentatively suggest, without direct evidence, that a Roman camp occupied the north-west corner of the city, in the area of the present Citadel. But we have no better contemporary evidence of the Roman military presence in Damascus than Eusebius' report of how in 311/312 a '*stratopedarchēs,* whom the Romans call *dux*', tortured women there to give false evidence against the Christians.[40]

As for the Strata Diocletiana, a branch-road marked by milestones now diverted south from near Dumayr, to pass along the eastern edge of the Jebel Hauran. If this road was first marked out at this time (which cannot be certain), that might help to explain why the prominent village of Sakkaia, on the north-eastern edge of the Jebel Hauran,[41] now found itself elevated to the rank of a city with the name 'Maximianopolis'. It will in fact have been named after Galerius as 'Caesar' in this region. For his full name was C. Galerius Valerius Maximianus, and literary sources often (confusingly) call him Maximianus. The place first appears with this name on one of the numerous Tetrarchic boundary-regulation inscriptions which are so prominent a feature of the Near East in this period.[42] Half-way between the south end of the Jebel Hauran and Azraq oasis (an area already occupied by the army in the Severan period),[43] the road was joined by another coming from Bostra in the Hauran plain.

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[39] *MUSJ* 15 (1930), 226, no. 7; *Not. Dign., Or.* XXXII, 34.

[40] Malalas, *Chron.,* 307–308, see *Not. Dign., Or.* XI, 20; for the hypothetical camp, D. Sack, "Damaskus, die Stadt *intra muros*", *DM* 2 (1985), 207, plan on p. 210. For the *stratopedarchēs,* or *dux,* Eusebius, *HE* IX, 5, 2.

[41] See

[42] *SEG* VII, no. 1055; see App. A, no. 35.

[43] See 4.1 above.

Before that point, on the outer road, there lies (to take only one example) the major Roman fort of Deir el-Kahf, still standing to a height of several metres when surveyed in the early years of this century. A Latin inscription naming the 'Augusti and Caesares' of 306 probably comes from the lintel of a gateway.[44] It will of course serve to show that some construction took place there in that year, not that there was no fort there previously. But combined with the evidence of other forts and Tetrarchic milestones in this area, it is enough to confirm the impression of consistent activity in the border-zone between cultivated land and the steppe.

New evidence, in the form of a Latin inscription from Azraq, serves both to show how the road-system all the way from Bostra to Dumatha was envisaged and to demonstrate a very surprising level of military investment here:

> [The Emperor built?] through his very brave soldiers of the legion XI Cl(audia) and VII Cl(audia) and I Ital(ica) and IV Fl(avia) and I Ill(yricorum) linked by manned posts *(praetensione coligata)* to his soldiers from the legion III Cyr(enaica). From Bostra to Basien(s)es 66 miles, and from Basien(s)es to Amat(a) 70 and from Amata to Dumata 208 miles.[45]

The involvement of these four legions becomes all the more surprising when one realises that they (or detachments of them) had come from Moesia on the Danube. The date is almost certainly the 290s, when detachments of these same legions are found in Egypt.

The distances and places are also significant. The total of 344 Roman miles would give a distance of almost 500 km. There are many puzzles here, not the least being exactly what is meant by *praetensione coligata:* the reference to a line of manned posts is no more than a serious hypothesis. But it is certain that both Bostra and Dumat(h)a are mentioned. Hence some military link is being envisaged between these places, which are in fact almost 500 km apart. From the intervals given, it may well be that 'Basiensis' is the name of Azraq oasis itself, where the inscription was found. If that is so, it is almost certain that the same place is named on a very revealing Latin inscription of 334, found roughly half-way between Azraq and Bostra:

> When Vincentius the *protector,* on duty at 'Basie', saw that many of the peasants while carrying water for their own use had been ambushed and killed by the Saraceni, he constructed a water-tank from the foundations, in the consulship of Optatus and Bassus.[46]

If Vincentius, named also on a fragmentary Latin building-inscription from Azraq, dating to 333, was indeed stationed at Azraq/Basiensis(?), the water-tank itself will clearly have been constructed near where the inscription was found.

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[44] For the fort see *PAES* IIA, 145ff.; for the inscription, *PAES* IIIA, 126, no. 228.

[45] See now M. P. Speidel, "The Roman Road to Dumata (Jawf in Saudi Arabia) and the Frontier Strategy of *Praetensione Colligare*", *Historia* 36 (1987), 213.

[46] *AE* (1948), no. 106; see Kennedy, *Explorations,* 184, and Speidel, op. cit., 217.

The wider context seems just about intelligible. There seem to have been military operations against 'Saracens', apparently dating to 290, and perhaps covering much of the area along which the Strata Diocletiana would be constructed, and even following the line of penetration into the Wadi Sirhan. But that apart, the significant development is marked by roads and forts stretching along the edge of the steppe, and at certain points across it. It was not a 'frontier', least of all one designed to repel a major invasion or migration of peoples, which no one could have expected or had any reason to expect. But it does seem to have accompanied an extension of cultivation into the steppe zone, and to have been designed against attacks by 'Saracens'.

Similar forts certainly existed further south near the edge of the Jordanian steppe, and could now be found some distance to the east of Trajan's road.[47] Only a few need be mentioned here. One is the quite large rectangular fort, measuring some 160 m by 140 m, at Umm-er Resas, lying a few kilometres east of the Via Nova, and just north of the Wadi Mujib. By good fortune an inscription of AD 785 seems to give the name of the place, Kastron Mefaa. It must surely therefore be the same place as one which Eusebius mentions in his *Onomasticon:* 'Mēphaath: of the tribe of Benjamin; and there is another beyond the Jordan, where a garrison of soldiers is posted beside the desert'.[48]

Another is the even better preserved fort called Qasr Bshir situated some 25 km to the south-east. Both lie to the north or east of the Wadi Mujib, in a cultivable semi-arid zone well to the west of the present Desert Highway from Amman to Aqaba. Qasr Bshir is much smaller, an irregular rectangle of 50–60 m, and stands to a height of several metres. But what is important is that its Latin building-inscription is still in place on the lintel over the main entrance. Few documents proclaim more clearly the message that even a small outpost like this is to be seen as the product of the Imperial political and military system:

> To our Best and Greatest Emperors, Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus Pius Felix Invictus Augustus and Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus

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[47] For this area see S. T. Parker, *Romans and Saracens* I–II (1987), and idem (ed.), *The Roman Frontier in Central Jordan* I–II (1987).

[48] See Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*, 189–193. Eusebius, *Onom.*, ed. Klostermann, 128. Also mentioned in *Not. Dign., Or.* XXXVII, 19: 'Equites Promoti Indigenae, Mefa'. See, however, Y. Elitzur, "The Identification of Mefa'at in View of the Discoveries from Kh. Umm er-Resas", *IEJ* 39 (1989), 267, questioning the identification. This is nonetheless secure; see M. Piccirillo, "L'identificazione storica delle rovine di Umm er-Rasas—*Kastron Mefaa* in Giordania", *Biblica* 71 (1990), 527.

> Pius Felix Invictus Augustus, and Flavius Valerius Constantius and Galerius Valerius Maximianus the most noble Caesars, the *castra* of the *praetorium Mobenum* (which) from the foundations Aurelius Asclepiades, *praeses* of the province of Arabia, carried through to completion.[49]

Whatever the precise intended function of a small fort like this, it is a mere outpost compared with the large rectangular camp, of 242 m by 190 m, situated a few kilometres to the south-west, near the head of the Wadi Mujib, and still called Lejjun *(legio)*. No inscription survives to give a date, but the archaeological evidence shows that it too is Tetrarchic.[50] The camp would not have held a legion of the earlier size, some 6000 men; but it is thought that it could have taken 1000–1500, quite appropriate for the smaller, or sub-divided, legions of the late Empire. The odds are that this is the place called Bethorum, where the *Notitia Dignitatum* places a legion, the IV Martia. This newly formed legion will have been stationed here in the Tetrarchic period.

These and other small forts lie in the cultivable region of the Moab plateau, drained by the 'Grand Canyon' of Jordan, the Wadi Mujib, the ancient Arnon, which runs into the Dead Sea. The area, with all these forts, lies well within the 200-mm-rainfall limit for dry-farming. Here again Eusebius shows himself aware of the presence of Roman posts. For he speaks of the gorge called Arnonas, north of 'Areopolis of Arabia', 'in which military garrisons are on guard on all sides, because of the dangerousness of the area'.[51] He can hardly be speaking of the terror which still grips the modern traveller whose vehicle begins the precipitous descent down the King's Highway into the gorge. The reference can only be either to robbers using hideouts along the wadi or, much more probably, to the possibility of raids from the steppe, only a few kilometres away.

Even further south, along Trajan's road down to Aila on the Red Sea, there were military installations, for instance at Udruh to the east of Petra (which may possibly have been another legionary camp) and at Humeima, half-way between Petra and Aila.[52] Neither the line of the road nor the forts associated with it should be thought of as a true frontier. Rather, the road was a means of communication, and the forts represented essentially the limits of policing, for which no Imperial employees were available except the army. No clear distinction can thus be drawn between frontier functions and police ones; and although, as we have seen, the evidence is perfectly clear in representing Roman troop-placements on the fringe of the steppe as being intended for protection against 'Saracens', non-sedentary populations of a similar character existed also within the 'frontier', above all in the Negev and Sinai. It is thus significant from both points of view that our evidence for the Roman military presence in this period seems to show an increased level of 'internal' policing also. The random selection of allusions to Roman military posts (usually called *phrouria*) provided by Eusebius' *Onomasticon* is particularly valuable: apart from the 'frontier' installations already mentioned, he speaks of posts at Thamara on the road between Hebron and Aila; on the road down from Aelia (Jerusalem) to Jericho; near Zoara, just below the south end of the Dead Sea; ten Roman miles (15 km) north of Hebron; a village called Thaima, about fifteen Roman miles (22 km) from Petra (direction not stated); another in Gebalene (the area north of Petra); and Chermel, 'a very big village' to the south of Hebron.[53]

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[49] For a detailed description see V. A. Clark, "The Roman *Castellum* of Qasr Bshir", in S. T. Parker, op. cit. (n.47) II, 457. The building-inscription is *CIL* III, no. 14149.

[50] See J. C. Groot, "The Barracks of el-Lejjun", in Parker, *Roman Frontier* I, 260; and B. de Vries, "The Fortification of el-Lejjun", ibid., 311; Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*, 131. See *Not. Dign., Or.* XXXVII, 22: 'Praefectus legionis quartae Martiae, Betthoro'.

[51] Eusebius, *Onomasticon*, ed. Klostermann, 10: ἐν ᾧ καὶ φρούρια πανταχόθεν φυλάττει στρατιωτικὰ διὰ τὸ φοβερὸν τοῦ τόπου.

[52] For Udruh see A. Killick, "Udruh and the Southern Frontier", in Freeman and Kennedy, *DRBE*, 431. For Humeima, Kennedy and Riley, *RDF*, 146–148.

Eusebius was of course not conducting a survey of Roman military posts, but making incidental mention of them in listing Biblical place-names, and relating them to contemporary settlements. For that very reason, the scatter of Roman forts *(phrouria)* which he mentions must be impressive. One at Zoara south of the Dead Sea (where we earlier saw some persons making their census-returns under Hadrian)[54] may perhaps be especially significant. For it is possible that a Roman road with forts ran down the Wadi Arabah, the great depression which continues the Jordan and Dead Sea valleys, as far as Aqaba. Eusebius' *phrourion* at Zoara might be the enclosure, 84 m square and fed by an aqueduct, which is visible from the air and is known as Qasr el Feifeh.[55] Then 25 km south of the Dead Sea is the small fort at el Telah, with a reservoir fed by an aqueduct and (surprisingly) fronting a regular network of ditches, indicating cultivation; it must be the place called Toloha, where the *Notitia Dignitatum* locates the Ala Constantiana; similarly, Gharandal, some 80 km further south, where there is another small fort, should be 'Arielda', where the *Notitia* lists the Cohors Secunda Galatarum.[56]

These of course are in effect police posts, not frontier defences. But these little outposts, situated in a dramatic and desolate landscape, are evidence of the steadily growing Roman military investment in this southern area leading to Aila and the Red Sea. Moreover, new evidence continues to accumulate for this investment, and precisely from the Tetrarchic period. Thus further south along the wadi, at Yotvata or Ghadyan, 40 km north of Aila, a Roman fort of some 40 km square has been excavated. What makes it significant is the Latin building-inscription found on the site.[57] Not wholly intelligible, it nonetheless speaks the familiar language of Tetrarchic imperialism: 'For perpetual peace Diocletianus Augus(tus) and Maximianus Augus(tus) and Constantius and Maximianus (i.e., Galerius) the most noble Caesars erected the wing with the gate (?) by the *providentia* of Priscus, *praeses* [of ?]'. Which province will have been named where the text breaks off will be discussed later.[58] It is not quite clear what was being built, or whether the inscription does not refer rather to the establishment of an *ala* (wing) in the sense of a mounted unit, at this point. But the message and function of the inscription are clear; and the Arabic name of the place, 'Ghadyan', will reflect that of the known Roman site of Ad Dianam.[59]

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[53] Eusebius, *Onomasticon,* ed. Klostermann, 8, 24, 42, 50, 96, 142, 172. I. Roll, op. cit. (n.57, below) identifies Thamara, a day's journey south of Mampsis, with Hazeva (see his excellent map on p. 254).

[54] 3.2 above.

[55] Kennedy and Riley, *RDF,* 144–145.

[56] Kennedy and Riley, *RDF,* 205–208.

Finally, from Aila itself we now have fragments of an official Latin inscription, which may date to the second or third decade of the fourth century.[60] No precise conclusions can be drawn from it; but it is enough—along with a remarkable density of other evidence on the ground—to make it reasonable that later narrative sources were not wrong, and that 'from Aila to the Persian frontier' there was an unprecedented level of military construction in the period of Diocletian. In the central area this direct Roman military presence may well reflect the disappearance of Palmyra as a military power, exercising a widespread police function. But the evidence, of various kinds, over the whole length of the 'frontier' is too consistent for us to doubt that, in a way not attested before, this activity reflected concern about the threat from the 'Saracens'. This conclusion would be misleading only if it led us to suppose that comparable problems of security and the military policing of roads, caused (in some areas) by the presence of non-sedentary 'Arab' or 'Saracen' populations, did not exist also far within the 'frontiers' which we can now draw on the map. The force of a rapidly changing Roman Imperial state was felt in this period also within the existing provinces.

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57. See Z. Meshel, "A Fort at Yotvata from the Time of Diocletian", *IEJ* 39 (1989), 228; I. Roll, "A Latin Imperial Inscription from the Time of Diocletian Found at Yotvata", ibid., 239. Roll's article constitutes an important survey of the entire Tetrarchic road-and-fortification-system in this region.

58. 5.2 below.

59. So already Bowersock, *Roman Arabia,* 179–181.

60. H. I. MacAdam, "Fragments of a Latin Building Inscription from Aqaba, Jordan", *ZPE* 79 (1989), 163; *AE* (1989), no. 750.

5.2. THE NEAR EAST IN THE TETRARCHIC EMPIRE, AD 284–312

The line of forts, many carrying grandiose inscriptions in Latin, which now stretched along the borders of cultivable land, and the milestones of the Strata Diocletiana remain the most obvious expressions in the Near East of the new Tetrarchic order. Many other changes seem to have taken place also: but in some cases their dating and real nature remain uncertain, and in others there is no relevant evidence to illustrate their application in this region. Presumably, for instance, Diocletian's extraordinarily ambitious *edictum* of 301, laying down the maximum prices which could be charged for a vast range of goods and services, was applied in these provinces. It certainly lists many products whose names imply that they originated from towns in this region.[1] But as to how (or even, strictly speaking, whether) it affected the life of the Near East we have no evidence at all.

By contrast, the course and effects of the last great persecution of the Christians, between 303 and 312, are more fully known for this region than for any other. Moreover, our evidence, almost all provided by Eusebius of Caesarea, makes it possible to discern a parallel development in the impact of the state on its subjects, in the form of the census and new types of direct taxation. This in its turn can be related to the remarkable series of boundary-decisions, often attributed to officials called *censitores* (transliterated in Greek as *kēnsitores*), which can be found in various areas of the Near East—and are themselves some of our best evidence for the names of communities and the nature of social formations there.[2]

These and other developments in the nature of the state and its relations with its subjects seem to have taken place within the framework of two other profound changes in the structure of the state, both of which culminated in the Tetrarchic period, after a slow evolution through the third century: the sub-division and rearrangement of provinces, and the progressive (and not easily traced) separation of civilian and military functions. Viewed from Rome, the latter was of immense significance. For the evolution not merely of separate posts but of whole career-patterns in Imperial service into civil and military meant implicitly the abandonment of the preconception on which the whole history of Rome and its Empire had been based: the unity of military and governmental responsibilities and capacities on the part of members of the office-holding class. It accompanied another change which represented a profound rupture with the Roman past, the loss both of military functions and of many governorships by members of the Senate in Rome.

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[1] On the prices edict and the products named in it, see S. Lauffer, *Diokletians Preisedikt* (1971). For the distribution of epigraphic copies, M. H. Crawford and J. Reynolds in *JRS* 65 (1975), 160, and J. Reynolds in C. M. Roueché, *Aphrodisias in Late Antiquity* (1989), ch. 12.

[2] Text to nn.12ff. below and App. A.

Viewed from below, from the standpoint of the inhabitant of the Near Eastern provinces, these changes were both gradual and probably of no very profound significance. They were not invisible, however: we have seen already how inscriptions recording building and other activities by governors of Arabia reflect a change of title, from the senatorial *legatus Augusti pro praetore* to the non-senatorial term, gradually established for all governors, *praeses* (*hēgemōn* in Greek);[3] along with that came a change from the standard senatorial status-term *vir clarissimus* (*lamprotatos* in Greek) to *vir perfectissimus (diasēmotatos)*. As all the provinces of the Near East had always been 'Imperial' (that is, their governors had been nominated by the Emperor), no governors with the title 'proconsul' had ever served there. Now the title *legatus* disappeared also, being last attested (in the evidence which we happen to have) on the inscription from Heliopolis in which L. Artorius Pius Maximus, *v(ir) c(larissimus)*, honoured Diocletian sometime between 285 and 297.[4]

It is by no means equally certain that a general division into military and civilian functions had already been carried out by this period. Indeed, in the case of the construction of the *castra* of the *praetorium Mobenum* by Aurelius Asclepiades, *praeses* of Arabia between 293 and 305, it clearly had not; for the building is distinctly military, but the term *praeses* was—or was becoming—the regular title for a civilian governor.[5] Nonetheless, the emergence of the Latin term *dux* as a regular expression for a military commander did not go unnoticed. (Before the third century it had not been an official term at all, but is found at Dura-Europos, and had therefore come into use by the 250s.)[6] For, as we have seen, Eusebius talks of a '*stratopedarchēs* (literally "camp-commander"), whom the Romans call *dux*', conducting examinations at Damascus during the persecution of 311/312.[7]

Eusebius must be referring to the same function when he speaks of another *stratopedarchēs* executing Christian martyrs who were already serving sentences in the copper mines at Phaeno in 309/310. In this case, moreover, Eusebius does portray a division of civilian and military functions. For it is the governor (here called *archōn*) of the province who consults the Emperor (Maximinus) about the Christians, and the *stratopedarchēs*, or *dux*, explicitly described as 'placed in charge of the forces there', who carries out the executions.[8] The late-Roman structure of the state was visibly coming into being.

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[3] 5.1, text to n.4.

[4] *IGLS* VI, no. 2721; 5.1, text to n.13.

[5] *CIL* VI, no. 14149; 5.1 above.

[6] 4.1 above.

[7] Eusebius, *HE* IX, 5, 2: ἕτερος στρατοπεδάρχης, ὅν δοῦκα Ῥωμαῖοι προσαγορεύουσιν.

This same report by Eusebius also implies the only major rearrangement of provinces in the Near East which certainly took place under the Tetrarchy. For he describes the mines at Phaeno, which lie to the east of the Wadi Arabah and to the north of Petra, as being in 'Palestine'. Equally, Eusebius in his *Onomasticon* sometimes calls Petra a city 'of Arabia' (its traditional designation), and sometimes a city 'of Palestine'.[9] This and later evidence makes it certain that under the Tetrarchy, probably in the 290s, the southern part of the Roman province of Arabia, including the southern Negev, Sinai and the area east of the Wadi Arabah, from Aila north to roughly a line from the southern tip of the Dead Sea eastward into the steppe, became part of the province of Syria Palaestina. The effect—and quite possibly the intention—was to leave in 'Arabia' part of the Roman forces along the edge of the steppe zone, in particular the legion III Cyrenaica, still at Bostra, and the IV Martia at Bethorum, almost certainly Lejjun. But Udruh, if it was a legionary base, was now in 'Palaestina', as was the legion X Fretensis, now moved forward from Aelia (Jerusalem) to Aila on the Gulf of Aqaba. The transfer of this legion thus took place within the now much-enlarged province (usually called just Palaestina in the fourth century); and the forces stationed along the steppe zone will have been divided roughly in half (or in equal thirds, if we think also of those along the Strata Diocletiana in Syria Phoenice); or into four roughly equal segments, if we include the two legions which the *Notitia* records at Sura and Oresa, in the province of Syria Coele.

This transfer of a large territory represents the only certain rearrangement of provinces made at this time. There is no documentary evidence from this period for a province called Augusta Libanensis (later to be detached from Phoenice) or for a 'Euphratensis' along the river and embracing Commagene, or part of it.[10] As for the territory across the Euphrates, we do not even know whether there was now only one province, Mesopotamia, or also another, Osrhoene. When there are contemporary documents, they sometimes make confusion worse. Thus a papyrus reveals a man calling himself 'Aurelius Malchus from the confines of Eleutheropolis of the New Arabia', who presented a petition to a governor in Egypt in about 314–318. The place must be the city of Eleutheropolis in Idumaea, south-west of Jerusalem, and (until now at least) part of Syria Palaestina. The idea that while much of 'Arabia' became part of 'Palaestina', part of 'Palaestina' formed a short-lived province called

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[8] Eusebius, *MP* 13, 1–3. On the mines see below.

[9] Eusebius, *Onom.*, ed. Klostermann, 36, 13; 112, 8; 144, 7 (still listed as of 'Arabia'). For Aila and X Fretensis see above. See Y. Tsafrir, "The Transfer of the Negev, Sinai and Southern Transjordan from *Arabia* to *Palaestina*", *IEJ* 36 (1986), 7.

[10] For these issues see T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (1982), 223–224.

'New Arabia' seems odd even for an inventive period like the Tetrarchy. But no better solution has been proposed, and the question must be left open.[11]

What is called here the Near East will certainly have been in the 290s part of one of twelve wholly new groupings of provinces known as dioceses. The one in question was called Oriens, but embodied a much wider area than 'the Near East' in this sense, namely the whole region from south-eastern Anatolia round through Egypt to Libya. As these 'dioceses' emerge into the light in the course of the fourth century, they appear as regions each with their own civilian governor, with largely judicial functions, normally called the *Vicarius* (meaning a deputy of the Praetorian Prefects), and with their own financial officials. But there is no evidence to show how this superstructure affected the provinces of the Near East in the Tetrarchic period. In any case the almost continuous presence there of an *Augustus* or a *Caesar* was far more significant.

That is not to say that the weight and authority of the Imperial state was not felt as such, or that being part of it was simply an unchanging and accepted framework for ordinary life. On the contrary, the most detailed and localised of possible evidence shows that the demands and decisions of the state in this precise period penetrated into the most remote of country districts. The evidence that we have seems to be a reflection of the fundamental reform of taxation which Diocletian and Maximian proclaimed in 297. We know it best from the edict which the Prefect of Egypt issued in that year:

> Our most provident Emperors, the eternal(?) Diocletian and Maximian, Augusti, and Constantius and Maximian, most noble Caesars, having learned that it has come about that the levies of the public taxes are being made haphazardly, so that some persons are let off lightly and others overburdened, have decided to root out this most evil and baneful practice for the benefit of their provincials and to issue a deliverance-bringing rule to which the taxes shall conform. Accordingly, the levy on each aroura according to classification of the land, and the levy on each head of the peasantry, and from which age to which, may be accurately(?) known to all from the [recently] issued divine (i.e., Imperial) edict and the schedule annexed thereto, copies of which I have prefaced for promulgation with this edict of mine. Accordingly, seeing that in this, too, they have received the greatest benefaction, the provincials should make it their business in conformity with the divinely issued regulations to pay their taxes with all speed and by no means wait for the compulsion of the collector; for it is proper to fulfil most zealously and scrupulously all the royal obligations, and if anyone should be revealed to have done otherwise after such

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[11] See Ph. Mayerson, "P. Oxy. 3574: 'Eleutheropolis of the New Arabia'", *ZPE* 53 (1983), 258.

> bounty, he will risk punishment. The magistrates and council presidents of every city have been ordered to send out to every village and every locality a copy of the divine edict together with the schedule, and also of this (edict) as well, in the interest of having the munificence of our Emperors and Caesars come speedily to the knowledge of all.[12]

Whether the population of the Empire really shared the view that the proposal to tax them and their property more efficiently represented an act of munificence *(megalodōria)* on the part of the Emperors may be doubted. Nor does the complex evidence on late-Roman taxation really allow us to go much beyond what is implied here: that the new system would relate both to each head of population and to each item of agricultural property 'in accordance with the character of the land'. What this meant was that different types of land, from vineyards to pasture-land, would be assigned different taxation-values. As it happens, the only relatively clear explanation of how this calculation was made comes from a text preserved in Syriac; whether that implies that the system which it describes was based on practice in the Syrian region (or, more precisely, Mesopotamia) is not clear. At any rate this text, part of the so-called Syro-Roman Law Book, composed in Greek in the later fifth century and apparently translated very soon into Syriac, includes the only available description of how different categories of land were to be assessed and then calculated in terms of a common land-taxation unit, the *iugum* (hence the Latin term for this process, *iugatio*):

> The *iugum* was measured in the days of the Emperor Diocletian and became fixed. Five *iugera,* which make 10 *plethra,* of vineyard were established as 1 *iugum;* 20 *iugera* of seed land, which make 40 *plethra,* provide *annonas* of 1 *iugum* . . . So, too, land which is of poorer quality and is reckoned as second quality: 40 *iugera,* which make 80 *plethra,* pay 1 *iugum;* if, however, it is reckoned or assessed as third quality, 60 *iugera,* making 120 *plethra,* provide 1 *iugum.*[13]

Any system of land-taxation ought in principle to have been based on unambiguous information as to the ownership of the land in question and the boundaries between different properties or different communities. There is abundant evidence through the Near East to show that a particular effort was made by the state in the Tetrarchic period to clarify these questions and record the results on inscriptions erected *in situ*. This operation may well have been conducted throughout the whole region. But the surviving records which we happen to have come mainly from two areas: from the villages of the limestone massif between Antioch and Beroea, and from a wide zone from Galilee across the Golan heights (Gaulanitis) to the Hauran and the new city of Maximianopolis, and as far south as Souedias. It thus involved at least four provinces: Syria (Coele), Palaestina, Phoenice and Arabia.

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[12] A. E. R. Boak and H. C. Youtie, *The Archive of Aurelius Optatus (P. Cair. Isidor.)* (1960), no. 1, trans. N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, *Roman Civilisation*³ II (1990), 419.

[13] For the 'Syro-Roman Law Book' see, e.g., A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur* (1922), 83. The translation is taken from N. Lewis and M. Reinhold, *Roman Civilisation*³ II (1990), 420, with extensive revisions very kindly provided by Sebastian Brock, using revised texts published by E. Sachau, *Syrische Rechtsbücher* I (1907), and by A. Vööbus, "The Syro-Roman Law Book", *Papers Est. Theol. Soc. in Exile* 36 (1982), 39.

Many of the inscriptions are fragmentary, and most involve complex problems of topography and local nomenclature. It will be sufficient here to give a few examples (a complete catalogue is provided later).[14] Most are dated merely by the Tetrarchs of 293 to 305. But those with more precise dates show that the operation was indeed conducted at the same moment, 296/297, when Diocletian and Maximian were announcing their new taxation-system. One such text comes from near the famous Christian shrine of Qalaat Seman in the limestone massif:

> For the safety and victory of our Lords Diocletianus and Maximianus, the *Augusti,* and Constantius and Maximianus, the most noble *Caesares,* there were established the boundaries [of the village] of the Kaprokēroi, under the supervision of Iulius Sabinus the most distinguished *(lamprotatos) kēnsitōr* (year 345, Panemos 8).[15]

The era is that of the city of Antioch, and the year is 296/297.

Inscriptions reflecting the same operation further south tend to adopt a different formula. Thus, for example, one found north of the Sea of Galilee reads as follows:

> Diocletianus and Maximianus, the *Augusti,* (and) Constantius and Maximianus [the *Caesares*], ordered (this) stone to be set up, marking the boundary of the fields of the village of Dēra and (those of) Ōsea, under the supervision of Aelius Statilius the *perfectissimus.*[16]

The same formula is used in a newly published inscription from the southern Golan, giving the boundaries of the *kōmē* of Kapar Haribos.[17] It appears also further east, in the inscription recording a similar boundary-marker, which serves also as the earliest evidence for the elevation of Sakkaia in the northern Hauran to be the city of Maximinianopolis:

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[14] For surveys of the evidence then available see A. Déléage, *La capitation du Bas-Empire* (1945), 152–157; cf. also W. Seston, *Dioclétien et la tétrarchie* I (1946), 374. For the full list now known see App A.

[15] J. Jarry, "Inscriptions arabes, syriaques et grecques du massif du Bélus en Syrie du Nord", *Annales Islamologiques* 7 (1967) 139, on p. 158, no. 33 = *AE* (1968), no. 514; see below, App. A, no. 10.

[16] *SEG* XIX, no. 901; App. A, no. 29.

[17] P. Porat, "A New Boundary Stone from the Southern Golan", *SCI* 10 (1989–90), 130; App. A, no. 21.

> Our Lords Diocletianus and Maximianus, the *Augusti,* and Constantius and Maximianus, the most noble *Caesares,* ordered (this) stone to be set up marking off (the territory of the?) village of the Oreloi (and the) boundary of Maximianopol(is), under the supervision of Lucius and Acacius, *kēnsitores.*[18]

More examples need not be given here. These inscriptions, of which there must originally have been hundreds (if not more), are important first as yet further evidence of the way in which the Emperors made their names and their measures literally visible even in quite remote country districts. The connection with the census, and hence with taxation, is perfectly evident both from the involvement of state officials on so systematic a basis and from their title, *censitor.* In all cases the boundaries determined are, however, not those of private properties, but of the territories of collectivities, whether villages or cities. The implication must be that villages had a collective responsibility at least for the land-tax due from their area (and perhaps for the *capitatio* also). Whether, if a village lay within the territory of a city, such as Antioch, its tax-payment was in some way mediated through that city remains uncertain. But on any construction the long list of village-names appearing on these boundary-inscriptions set up by Roman *censitores* represents further evidence of the primary role of villages in the structure of society in this region.

Regular taxation was not the only form of payment which the state might exact from its subjects. The familiar area of conflict represented by exactions for transport services is reflected again in a letter from Diocletian and Maximian to Charisius, evidently an official and possibly the Charisius who was *praeses* of Syria in 290: 'Let no one of the rural plebs, which, situated outside the walls (of any city), pays its *capitatio* and provides the appropriate *annona* (land tax?), be called away to perform any other duty nor be forced by a *rationalis* (financial official) of ours to undertake the provision of mules or horses for public service'.[19] In rather different language, and with a concrete reference to regular taxation, the thought is precisely that which Domitian had expressed in his *mandata* to a financial official, and which the public had been able to see on a Greek inscription at Hama.[20] If the date is indeed around 290, the word *capitatio* had already come into use for what had earlier been called *tributum capitis;* and the use of *annona* (supplies) for the other form of obligation due strongly suggests that the land-tax was payable in kind. It is indeed certain that some direct taxation on the land was payable in kind in this period, and delivered to the army and officials in the form of supplies. But how the system really worked is a question of acute controversy which will not be pursued here.

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[18] *SEG* VII, no. 1055 (incomplete). Full text in M. Dunand, *Le musée du Soueida* (1934), 75, no. 160. App. A., no. 35.

[19] *Cod. Just.* XI, 55, 1; Charisius as *praeses Syriae* in 290, IX, 41, 9.

[20] 3.1 above.

That the 'rustic plebs' of the countryside was liable for both a personal tax and a land-tax is clear. But whether what Diocletian and Maximian say implies that city-populations were exempt from both is not: for the context is that of the demands of official travellers, and specifically of the provision of transport-animals. Nonetheless it is quite clear that the question of the census of city-populations was a controversial one at this period, and one on which successive Emperors took different views.[21] Eusebius' account of the second phase of the persecution, as it was conducted in Caesarea in 305/306, clearly implies that the authorities either already had, or compiled there and then, lists of all the inhabitants of the city, and used these to compel universal sacrifice.[22] In one version he uses the term *apographē,* the normal Greek expression for a census-return (already used by Luke's Gospel). But if this is indeed enough to show that city-dwellers were now liable to *capitatio,* five years later, when Maximinus was competing for power after the death of Galerius in 311, the situation seems to have changed. For when he arrived to take control in Bithynia, where Nicomedia lay, in that year, he is reported to have curried popular favour by suppressing the census. That probably means the census of city-dwellers. For Eusebius' description of a general famine in the same year distinguishes city-dwellers from those who lived 'in the fields and villages'; and he claims that it was the high death-rate among these *agroikoi* which meant that the census-lists *(apographai)* were almost empty.[23] This may well be the real context for an Imperial letter preserved (under 313) in the *Theodosian Code* and addressed to the *praeses* of Lycia and Pamphylia: 'Let the *plebs urbana,* as is the custom also in the *Orientales provinciae,* by no means be enrolled in the censuses in respect of its *capitatio,* but in accordance with this order of ours let it be regarded as immune, as the same *plebs urbana* had been immune under our lord and parent Diocletianus, the senior Augustus'.[24] Though certainty is impossible, the tone and context of the letter would fit perfectly the circumstances of an Emperor (Maximinus) arriving (in 311) from the *Orientales provinciae* to seize power in Asia Minor, and seeking to win general favour where it mattered, among the urban population whom he would directly encounter. It might, however, belong a year later, in 312, in the context of equally complex exchanges between Maximinus and his subjects, over what position (if any) Christians were to occupy within the still predominantly pagan communities of these provinces. To see those exchanges in context, we need to go back to the history of the persecutions in the Near East, as they had evolved since 303.[25]

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[21] For these questions see T. D. Barnes, *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* (1982), 226ff.

[22] Eusebius, *Mart. Pal.* 4, 8 (long recension): ὀνομαστὶ χιλιάρχων [ἀπ'] ἀπογραφῆς ἕκαστον ἀνακαλουμένων. The short recension reads: χιλίαρχοι . . . κατ' οἴκους καὶ ἄμφοδα παριόντες ἀναγραφὰς τῶν πολιτῶν ἐποιοῦντο. For a general census under Galerius, including land and both rustic and city populations, see Lactantius, *de mort. pers.* 23, 1–2.

[23] Lactantius, *de mort. pers.* 36, 1; Eusebius, *HE* IX, 8, 5.

[24] *Cod. Theod.* XIII, 10, 2, following the arguments of Barnes, op. cit., 232.

Indeed even the preliminary stage which preceded the first general persecution ordered by Diocletian belongs in the Near East. For it was while he was in 'the Oriental region', and before moving to Nicomedia for the winter of 302/303, that Diocletian found that a sacrifice which he was conducting was nullified by a Christian sign placed on the animals by one of his attendants; and in reaction to this he ordered sacrifices on the part of all those serving in the palace, and of all soldiers.[26]

The record of the successive Imperial orders which followed in the years 303–312, and their enforcement in Palestine and the neighbouring provinces, as witnessed by Eusebius in Caesarea, constitutes the best evidence we have for the working of the Tetrarchic state and its relation with its subjects. Only some particularly relevant details need be picked out here. The earlier phases followed the terms of Imperial orders, in edict or letter form, issued from Nicomedia, and their enforcement depended entirely on the governor *(praeses)* in each province. The first edict was posted at Nicomedia on February 24, 303, and a copy reached Palaestina in March or April. Among other provisions it ordered that churches be destroyed, and copies of the Bible burned. Eusebius names the *praeses* of Palaestina, Flavianus, in office at the time, but reports no measures on his part to enforce it.[27] Soon after came other orders, first that the leaders of the Church be imprisoned and then that they be compelled to sacrifice.[28] Under this order Eusebius records that the first martyrdom at Caesarea was that of Procopius from Scythopolis, on June 7, 303. It is particularly significant that the long recension of Eusebius' *Martyrs of Palestine* (known from a Syriac translation contained in a manuscript of AD 411) describes how Procopius originated from Aelia (Jerusalem), but served the church at Scythopolis as a reader, as an interpreter from Greek into Aramaic (LŠN' YWNY' L'RMY' MTRGM) and as an exorcist. For this passing reference is the first indication we have that the predominantly Greek-speaking churches of Palaestina also had members who were speakers of a Semitic language. Procopius was brought from Scythopolis to Caesarea, testified before the governor and was executed.[29] Eusebius then gives the examples of Zacchaeus, a deacon from Gadara (evidently now part of Palaestina), and Alphaeus, from Eleutheropolis in Palaestina, a reader and exorcist at Caesarea.[30] A brief reference also confirms the existence of a separate military structure in Palaestina, for he describes the *stratopedarchēs* (that is, *dux*) enforcing sacrifice among the soldiers.[31]

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[25] For the view that *Cod. Theod.* XIII, 10 , 2, belongs in 312, see S. Mitchell, "Maximinus and the Christians in AD 312: A New Latin Inscription", *JRS* 78 (1988), 105, on which all of the following discussion of the persecution heavily depends.

[26] So Lactantius, *de mort. pers.* 10.

[27] Eusebius, *HE* VIII, 2, 4; *Mart. Pal., praef.* 1.

[28] *HE* VIII, 5; *Mart. Pal., praef.* 2.

In terms of the structure and working of the Empire, the persecution in the Near East was still being conducted at second hand, through the medium of written orders transmitted to the governors by the Emperors.[32] This remained the case in the second year of the persecution, 304/305, when Urbanus was *praeses* of Palaestina, and orders arrived that the whole population be compelled to sacrifice. The long recension of the *Martyrs* again conveniently serves to mark out some of the borders of the province of Palaestina as it then was, for it describes the martyrdom of Timotheos from Gaza, in the presence of Urbanus, as taking place in the context of a pagan festival, including plays, horse-racing and exposure of victims to wild beasts. The setting seems (the manuscripts vary) to be Gaza itself.[33] But even if it were in fact Caesarea, the context would be the same, for both cities were now *coloniae,* and the mass public entertainments listed represented some of the most distinctive Roman imports into the popular culture of the Greek East. It would not be surprising if the *praeses* had in fact attended public spectacles at a major city on the borders of his province.

A similar scene is also recorded by Eusebius at Tyre 'of Phoenice', which he says he witnessed in person; no governor is explicitly mentioned, but the *praeses* of Phoenice must have been there, for all executions and martyrdoms were conducted by governors. Once again the context is that of wild-beast shows *(venationes)* before a large crowd, in a city which had for a century been a Roman *colonia.*[34] Looking more widely, Eusebius speaks of martyrdoms in Egypt, Cappadocia and Pontos; but also—within the Near East—in

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[29] *Mart. Pal.* 1 (long recension). The Syriac text was published and translated by W. Cureton (1861). For the ms of AD 411, the earliest dated ms in Syriac, see also 12.3 below.

[30] Ibid., 5b–d.

[31] *HE* VIII, 4, 3–4. See ch. 1 above.

[32] Note, however, the puzzling account in the long recension of *Mart. Pal.* of how at this time Romanus, a deacon and exorcist from Caesarea, went to Antioch, appeared before the governor there, and was martyred while Diocletian was in the city. The attested movements of Diocletian make this most unlikely; Barnes, *New Empire,* 56.

[33] *Mart. Pal.* 3, 1.

[34] *HE* VIII, 8.

Arabia, at Antioch and in Mesopotamia. Going into rather more detail, naturally enough, as regards the neighbouring province, he mentions martyrdoms within the province of Phoenice of bishops and priests from Tyre, Sidon and Emesa.[35] His accounts are notable for two fundamental aspects of the Roman Imperial system: the conduct of their business by governors in public in the context of the life of the cities, and of their public spectacles and ceremonials; and the gruesome repertoire of forms of physical degradation and execution now deployed by the state. Eusebius' account also makes clear that another instrument of punishment had by now been added to this repertoire: condemnation to the mines. But that is best examined in the context of the much-intensified phase which followed the appointment of Maximinus as *Caesar* in 305, and his continued residence in the Near East.[36]

In the first instance renewal of persecution again took the form of letters distributed throughout the region in 305/306. Their content was the same, that all should sacrifice; but their enforcement was to employ new means, the involvement of city officials, proclamations by heralds, active searches of each city-quarter by soldiers and (as we have seen) the use of census-lists.[37] The impact of Maximinus' orders was followed by his arrival in person. Eusebius' description of the shows given by the Emperor at Caesarea to celebrate his birthday in November 306 might be taken to mark the high point of the integration of a Near Eastern city, and Roman *colonia,* into the pagan Imperial state:

> In the fourth year of the persecution against us, on the twelfth day before the Kalends of December, that is, on the twentieth of the month Dius, on the day before the Sabbath, a thing was done in this same Caesarea, in the presence of the tyrant Maximin himself, who was lavishing upon the multitudes spectacles in honour of his birthday, as it is called, which is truly worthy of being placed on record. Hitherto it was the custom that, when emperors were present, spectacles on a lavish scale should provide more excellent entertainments for the spectators than on any other occasion, and that new and strange shows should take the place of the usual programme. Sometimes it would be animals brought from India or Aethiopia or somewhere else; or perhaps men who amaze and divert the minds of the onlookers by a display of certain skilful bodily exercises. On that occasion also, since the emperor was providing the exhibition, it was abso-

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[35] *HE* VIII, 9, 1–13, 4.

[36] The significance of the change is heavily emphasised in *Mart. Pal.* 3, 5ff., but obscured in *HE.*

[37] *Mart. Pal.* 4, 8.

> lutely necessary that in some way the lavish display should include some unusual and extraordinary item.[38]

It might be quite difficult to find, in the entire literature of the Empire, a passage in which so many different strands of cultural history come together. For a start there is the dating-system employed, which combines elements from the history of the Church, the Roman calendar, the Macedonian months and the Jewish week. Then there is the Roman importation of the wild-beast shows, with the Emperor able to provide animals from far outside the Empire. But Roman as the content of the show is, the ideology of display is explicitly seen as only a grander version of what would be expected in a Greek city. The word translated as 'lavish display' is *philotimiai,* meaning at root 'love of reputation', now used concretely, and in the plural, for the shows put on, at their own expense, by the leading personalities of Greek cities.

The following episode, however, reveals that the Roman state in Palaestina had also developed in quite a different direction; for it contains the first explicit reference to condemnation to hard labour in 'the mines *(metalla)* of copper at Phainō of Palaistinē'.[39] The allusion is a painful reminder of how far our understanding is limited by what our sources happen to be interested in saying. For we have no evidence at all as to how long such mines had been in operation, or how they came to be in Imperial possession; but many references in Eusebius show that condemned Christians (and presumably others) carried out hard labour there, shackled, often mutilated and living under military guard. Nonetheless, Eusebius' account shows that by 309/310 the confessors working in the mines had achieved a high degree of liberty, and had even constructed buildings to serve as churches. But the then governor, arriving on a visit, consulted the Emperor, and the superintendent of the mines had these Christians either dispersed elsewhere or executed by the *dux*.[40] The earlier history of condemnation to the mines or quarries (for the word *metalla* covers both) can hardly be written; the institution begins to be visible from about the end of the first century AD. As regards these particular copper-mines, located at Fenan, east of the Wadi Arabah, between the south end of the Dead Sea and Petra, if they had been at Imperial disposition earlier (which we do not know), they would have been in the province of Arabia. But with the eastward and southward extension of Palaestina they now formed part of the means of repression under the control of the *praeses* of that province.

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[38] *Mart. Pal.* 6, 1–2 (long recension), trans. Lawlor and Oulton.

[39] *Mart. Pal.* 7, 2.

[40] *Mart. Pal.* 13, 1–3. For the background see F. Millar, "Condemnation to Hard Labour in the Roman Empire, from the Julio-Claudians to Constantine", *PBSR* 52 (1984), 124. For detailed accounts of the workings at Fenan see H. D. Kind, "Antike Kupfergewinnung zwischen Rotem und Totem Meer", *ZDPV* 81 (1965), 56, and A. Hauptmann and G. Weisberger, "Archaeometallurgical and Mining-archaeological Investigations in the Area of Feinan, Wadi Arabah (Jordan)", *ADAJ* 31 (1987), 419.

In this period above all, a governor in this region was not a free agent, and operated under the shadow of the Emperor himself. So Eusebius can report with some satisfaction that Urbanus, still *praeses,* and accustomed to his high *tribunal,* to his escort of soldiers and to sharing the table of 'the tyrant', suddenly found himself condemned to death by Maximinus, who delivered the sentence at Caesarea.[41]

With his successor, Firmilianus, we see yet another aspect of the deployment of force by the state. For at a city which the Syriac version of the *Martyrs* calls 'in Syriac Lud, but in Greek Diocaesarea'—a mistake, for the current name of Lydda was Diospolis—he held a mass trial of three hundred confessors sent from Egypt, conducted in public in front of the largely Jewish population of the town, with the herald calling out the Biblical names, like 'Elijah' and 'Daniel', which the Egyptian Christians bore. Firmilianus, perhaps on his normal judicial circuit, may have been unaware of the competing claims to the Biblical heritage which these names represented. But from Eusebius' Christian view, the point was unmistakable: 'the Jews were greatly amazed, while they themselves were despised for their wickedness and apostasy'.[42]

The last phase of persecution before the great changes of 311 also saw Maximinus trying to bring into effect both the resources of the state and those of the cities. In 308 Imperial orders were again circulated, commanding not only universal sacrifice but that pagan temples be reconstructed, that food on sale in the *agora* be sprinkled with libations and that sacrifices be demanded of those using the public baths. The normal features of ancient city life, long since a problem for Jews, were thus to be invested with an explicit religious meaning. The orders went to Imperial officials, the *praeses* and *dux,* but also to the magistrates of each city. In listing those concerned—*logistai (curatores), stratēgoi* (the normal Greek for the *duumviri* of a *colonia*) and *taboularioi* (a Latin term transliterated into Greek)—Eusebius must surely be using the example of his own *colonia,* Caesarea.[43] These measures have to be seen as a foreshadowing of the much more radical attempt at a revival of city paganism which Maximinus was to make in 311/312.

It must be this later stage which Eusebius is referring to in the *Ecclesiasti-*

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[41] *Mart. Pal.* 7, 7 (some details only in the long recension).

[42] *Mart. Pal.* 8 (long recension). See A. Oppenheimer, "Jewish Lydda in the Roman Period", *HUCA* 69 (1988), 115, on pp. 134–135.

[43] *Mart. Pal.* 9, 1–3.

cal History, when he says that along with temple-building and reconstruction, Maximinus appointed priests in each place and a High Priest for each province, giving each a military escort.[44] Maximinus had by then, after the death of Galerius, taken possession of Asia Minor and the Tetrarchic 'capital', Nicomedia. According to Eusebius, he subscribed to the formal edict of toleration issued by Galerius in 311 only to the extent of giving verbal orders to governors, and leaving it to his Praetorian Prefect to send round letters ordering the end of active persecution, telling them to write in turn to city and local officials.

At the same point in 311/312 Maximinus, now in control of both the Near East and Asia Minor, began to reverse the measures of toleration for Christians, taking steps of some sort to prevent their meeting in their cemeteries. But the fuller expression of his anti-Christian attitude came only after exchanges between himself and the communities he ruled, which are strikingly indicative of the real nature of the state in this period. In the view of both the two main Christian witnesses of this period, Eusebius and Lactantius, Maximinus was responsible for instigating the presentation to himself of anti-Christian petitions from the cities and leagues of these two regions.[45] Two of the most significant petitions were presented by the two 'capital' cities of the regions he ruled, Nicomedia and Antioch. So, in a letter of his which Eusebius quotes, written towards the end of 312, Maximinus says that at some point in the previous year, thus 311, when he arrived in Nicomedia, people had come before him bearing images of the gods and requesting that Christians be no longer permitted to live there. But at that time he had taken no steps, and would not do so until pressed by further petitions from both Nicomedia and other cities. Perhaps the most significant of these cities was Antioch, where the citizens (allegedly prompted by Maximinus himself) demanded as an Imperial favour that Christians no longer be allowed to live there.[46] The movement was led, according to Eusebius, by a citizen of Antioch called Theotecnus, who symbolised the pagan revival by erecting a cult-statute of Zeus Philios, instituting an array of ceremonials and purifications and inventing suitable oracular responses to please the Emperor.[47] Eusebius thought that Theotecnus was at that point *curator (logistēs)* of Antioch, and later states that he obtained a governorship *(hēgemonia)* from the Emperor—in fact of Galatia Prima, where he was again active in persecution.[48] The integration of city magistracies and Imperial office-holding was becoming steadily closer, along with the physical presence of the Imperial court in these provincial cities.

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[44] *HE* VIII, 14, 8–9.

[45] Eusebius, *HE* IX, 2; Lactantius, *de mort. pers.* 36, 3.

[46] *HE* IX, 9a, 4–6 (letter to Sabinus, probably Praetorian Prefect).

[47] *HE* IX, 2–3.

[48] *HE* IX, 2; 11, 5–6. S. Mitchell, "The Life of Saint Theodotus of Ancyra", *Anat. Stud.* 32 (1982), 93, on pp. 107–108.

The course of the persecution in these years was thus determined by a close inter-relation between the court and the cities; but nothing clearly distinguishes the pattern in the Near Eastern provinces from that in Maximinus' other area of control, Asia Minor. Eusebius tends of course to record specific events in the Near Eastern provinces: the arrests made by the '*stratodeparchēs* whom the Romans call *dux*' at Damascus 'of Phoenice'; martyrdoms at Emesa, 'a city of Phoenice' (conveniently demonstrating that no separate province of 'Augusta Libanensis' yet existed); and the trial and martyrdom of a major theologian, Lucian, a presbyter at Antioch, who was taken to Nicomedia for the purpose.[49] But when he generalises, what he says relates to both regions: 'As priests of the idols in each city, and above them High Priests *(archiereis),* there were appointed by Maximinus himself those who had particularly distinguished themselves in city affairs and had achieved a reputation in all these offices. They were filled with a special zeal in the service of the gods they worshipped'.[50] The last active phase of persecution was thus a close alliance between city and court, expressing values which were common to the Graeco-Roman cities of any region. Indeed even what might have seemed one of the most distinctive products of this phase, Maximinus' letter to Tyre about that city's and his own devotion to the gods, turns out—as a new inscription shows—to be a standard letter which Maximinus addressed also to communities in Asia Minor. Even the fact that it was inscribed in Latin at Tyre, and then translated into Greek by Eusebius for inclusion in his *Ecclesiastical History,* proves not to be a product of Tyre's status as a *colonia;* for (surprisingly) the same text, as sent to a small community in Lycia and Pamphylia, is also in Latin.[51]

In the meantime, however, Constantine, ruling in the West, had declared himself publicly as a Christian, had gained control of Rome in 312 and towards the end of the year met at Milan with Licinius, then in control of the Balkan region; they agreed on a proclamation of toleration of Christianity, and restitution of Christian property. Licinius invaded Maximinus' area in spring 313, and a final proclamation of toleration by Maximinus did nothing to avert his defeat, and his suicide at Tarsos. The declaration of toleration and restitution issued by Licinius from Nicomedia in June 313, in the name of Constantine and himself, was the historic document often later to be labelled 'the edict of Milan'. A new era had dawned in the religious and communal life of the Empire, in the Near East as elsewhere.

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[49] *HE* IX, 5, 2; 6, 1; 6, 3.

[50] *HE* IX, 4, 2.

[51] See Mitchell, op. cit. (n.25 above).

In a significant sense what is important about the record of the Near East in the Tetrarchic period is precisely that in cultural and religious terms it was not distinctive. Apart from rabbinic works in Aramaic, whose date is often very uncertain, and a couple of martyr-acts in Syriac, relating events at Edessa, only the slightest of epigraphic evidence explicitly reveals the presence of a population, within and beyond the 'frontier', speaking Semitic languages. Even the Greek culture of the region gives the strong impression of having become, under the pressure and influence of the state, more truly a Graeco-Roman one, in which Roman and Latin elements are very prominent. The physical record of the Roman forces, erecting grandiloquent Latin inscriptions, is more evident than ever before. Even the form in which many of the martyrs of the region met their death was itself a Roman importation, the wild-beast show: so for instance the three martyrs at Emesa in Maximinus' last year became 'food for beasts'.[52] Within pagan culture only one city in the region acted as a major centre of education, drawing young men from other provinces: the Latin 'island' of Berytus, where one could follow liberal studies and (in particular) Roman law. Such young men might come, like the future martyr Apphianus, who receives a brief biography from Eusebius, from a prominent family in Lycia.[53] But others came, for instance, from the province of Arabia, to devote themselves at Berytus to *liberalia studia* and the *professio iuris*.[54]

Opportunities for preferment in the Imperial service were all the more obvious partly because the Roman state had so visibly implanted itself in the region and had expanded its functions there. We catch an odd glimpse of that in Eusebius' report about Dorotheus, a priest at Antioch under the bishop Cyrillus, in 281–303: because he was a eunuch by birth, he won the favour of the Emperor, who placed him in charge of the dye-works at Tyre.[55] As with the mines at Phaeno, we have no evidence as to how long the Roman state had operated any such establishments. But one such now existed, and with it a post for the Emperor to confer as a favour. Merely being *procurator* of a dye-works was, however, a relatively modest office. Higher posts were open also, and all the more so as a result of the repeated physical presence of the Emperor, his court and his armies. Even senatorial status could become quite common among the upper classes of an Imperial 'capital' like Antioch. That

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52. *HE* IX, 6, 1.
53. Eusebius, *Mart. Pal.* 4–5.
54. *Cod. Just.* X, 50, 1. See Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 16–17, and 8.4 below.
55. *HE* VII, 32–33.

at least is the implication of a muddled passage in Malalas' *Chronicle,* which seems both to conflate the Emperors Maximianus and Maximinus, in talking of an Emperor's return from an Armenian campaign (apparently Maximinus' campaign in 312), and to confuse the diplomatic gesture of exchanging Imperial dress for the robe of a president at the city's Olympic games with a real act of abdication. But at all events Malalas records how both children and young men of Roman senatorial status performed at the games at Antioch in front of the Emperor. We know that Maximinus did fight an Armenian campaign in 312, and did return to Syria after it, for the winter of 312/313.[56]

The increased opportunities for civilian and military rank in the Imperial system might not have created fundamental problems for the cities if the Emperors themselves had not, precisely in this period, made a series of rulings which profoundly affected the tripartite relationship of individuals, their cities and the state.[57] In essence the Emperors chose to reward those in Imperial service with immunity from city obligations, not as before merely during their service, but for life, as a privilege of rank. It was thus these decisions which created the characteristic tension visible in the fourth century, whereby Imperial service became a prized escape-route which the Emperors themselves made repeated efforts to control. The effects had been felt immediately, however. The *Codex* of Justinian contains the fragmentary record of a hearing before Diocletian in person, in which the issue of rank and exemption was evidently raised by a deputation from Antioch. The two main figures, Firminus and Apollinarius (perhaps the *duoviri/stratēgoi* of the *colonia?*), are named, with the other leading citizens *(principales)* in attendance. It is thus probable, but not certain, that the hearing took place in Antioch itself. A speech in Greek, of which only fragmentary traces remain, was made on behalf of the deputation by one Sabinus. Diocletian then replied: 'To certain ranks *(dignitates)* exemption *(indulgentia)* from city and personal obligations *(munera)* has been granted by us: that is, to those who are ex-*praefecti* or ex-*praepositi.* These therefore will not be summoned to perform personal or city *munera*'.[58] The deputation must have been laying claim to the services of citizens of Antioch who had risen to these military ranks and then retired. They received a negative answer which, along with similar rulings relating to other posts and ranks, was dramatically to reduce the pool of local property-owners on whom the cities could depend. The closer integration of state and city—or the competition of state and city for the services of individuals—thus had consequences almost as profound as those of the fluctuating efforts of the state in first persecuting the Church and then restoring it. The Christianised Near East which would rapidly emerge in the following decades, with bishops privileged by the support of Emperors and their officials, churches for the first time rising as public buildings, and Aelia Capitolina transformed into a centre of Christian pilgrimage, adorned with monuments built by the Emperor, would itself be a function of the increased ambitions and ever more visible presence of the Imperial state.

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[56] 56. Malalas, *Chron.* 311, 12ff.; see Eusebius, *HE* IX, 8, 2; 4 (Armenian war).

[57] 57. For what follows see F. Millar, "Empire and City, Augustus to Julian: Obligations, Excuses and Status", *JRS* 73 (1983), 76.

[58] 58. *Cod. Just.* X, 48, 2.

5.3. LICINIUS AND CONSTANTINE, AD 313–337: RETROSPECT FROM A CHRISTIANISED EMPIRE

There was perhaps no period when the impact of the Roman state, or more precisely of the will of successive Emperors, was felt more acutely in the Near East than in the quarter of a century which followed Licinius' proclamation of 313, in the name of Constantine and himself, that Christianity would be tolerated, and Christian property restored. Licinius' first step was to come to Antioch and torture to death Theotecnus, the leader of the pagan revival under Maximinus.[1] Yet what we know of the government of the Near East in this period is largely confined to the consequences of that proclamation, its partial reversal in the later years of Licinius and its decisive reinstatement by Constantine after his defeat of Licinius in 324. Even more clearly, a strictly military history of the period cannot be written. We have nothing more than Imperial victory titles to suggest that Licinius may have fought a campaign on the eastern front in 313 or 314;[2] from then on, so far as we know, there was a standstill in fighting until near the end of Constantine's reign. It was only just before his death that an invasion of the eastern provinces, of which we know no details, was reported to the Emperor at Constantinople; and he was preparing an expedition against the Persians when he died near Nicomedia in 337.

Looked at in a longer perspective, that unfulfilled intention can be seen both as the culmination of a tendency which had shown itself ever more clearly over the preceding centuries and as a foretaste of the repeated campaigns and mutual invasions which were to mark the following decades. For the account in Eusebius simply presupposes the long-established rule that major campaigns required the presence of the Emperor in person. Moreover, for all the Christian colouring of his depiction of the role of Emperor as Constantine interpreted it, Eusebius still incorporates within it one of the most vivid of all expressions of Roman imperialism, and one which by implication expresses as clearly as anything else in our evidence the Imperial claim to the heritage of Alexander:

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[1] Eusebius, *HE* IX, 11, 5–6.

[2] Barnes, *New Empire,* 81.

> About this time ambassadors from the Indians, who inhabit the distant regions of the East, arrived with presents consisting of many varieties of brilliant precious stones, and animals differing in species from those known to us. These offerings they presented to the emperor, thus allowing that his sovereignty extended even to the Indian Ocean, and that the princes of their country, who rendered homage to him both by paintings and statues, acknowledged his imperial and paramount authority. Thus the Eastern Indians now submitted to his sway, as the Britons of the Western Ocean had done at the commencement of his reign.[3]

But now of course a quite different element could also enter the language of Imperial diplomacy. For some time earlier—when is not clear—Constantine had replied to an embassy from Shapur II (309–374) by writing a letter in which he represented himself as the protector of the Christian communities in Persia.[4] In spring 337 a further embassy arrived, on hearing of Constantine's preparations for his campaign, offered terms and, if we may believe Eusebius, had them accepted.[5]

If peace was then made, it was not to last long. For war broke out immediately after, and these exchanges were in reality the beginnings of the repeated conflicts which were to dominate the middle decades of the fourth century, and to form one of the central subjects of Ammianus' great *History.* But if the ambition for eastern conquests was something which went back even before the Imperial period, to the campaigns of Lucullus and Pompey, the military structure of the Roman Empire in the East, as Ammianus was to describe it, was almost exactly that which had reached its culmination in the Tetrarchic period. That is to say, an army stretched out, in relatively small units, perhaps none of more than some fifteen hundred men each, and occupying fortified cities, fortresses and small forts on a line from the Tigris to the Red Sea at Aila.

So far as we know, this system altered very little under the rule of Licinius and Constantine. The only real changes that are recorded belong at the very end of Constantine's reign, in the period from 335 or 336 when his son Constantius, as *Caesar,* was in command of the East to confront Persian raids; he seems, as we would expect, to have used Antioch as his capital. It was from

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3. Eusebius, *VC* IV, 50, trans. E. C. Richardson in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* ser. 2, vol. I (1890).

4. Eusebius, *VC* IV, 8–13. See T. D. Barnes "Constantine and the Christians of Persia", *JRS* 75 (1985), 126.

5. Eusebius, *VC* IV, 57 (chapter-heading); see Barnes, op. cit., 132.

there that he returned on hearing of the last illness of Constantine in the spring of 337.[6]

It was in this context that the last attested phase of the fortification of the frontier took place, along the upper Tigris in the area gained by the treaty of 298 or 299. One place concerned was the hitherto small town of Amida, on the right bank of the Tigris, and north of the Tur Abdin. Ammianus describes Constantius' measures:

> This city was once very small, but Constantius, when he was still a Caesar, in order that the neighbours *(accolae)* might have a secure place of refuge, at the same time that he built another city called Antoninupolis, surrounded Amida with strong walls and towers; and by establishing there an armoury of mural artillery, he made it a terror to the enemy, and wished it to be called after his own name.[7]

It is very likely that a Roman circuit does indeed underlie the massive medieval walls of Amida (Diyarbakir). But there is no other evidence that it was called Constantia or Constantina. That may be a confusion with the other place which he mentions, surely the same as the 'Tela, formerly called Antipolis' (perhaps 'Antoninopolis'), which the sixth-century *Chronicle of Edessa* says was built by Constantius; but whether it was also the same place as the 'Maximianopolis of Osrhoene' which Malalas says that Constantine rebuilt and called Constantina, we can hardly decide.[8] The place concerned, perhaps now called Constantia or Constantina, may well be Viransehir, on the road along the Mesopotamian shelf from Edessa to Nisibis, for a late-Roman circuit of walls is still visible there. In any case Ammianus' whole narrative presents the defensive system of Roman Mesopotamia as depending on fortified cities or towns: Amida, Bezabde near the Tigris, Nisibis, Singara.[9] But Ammianus, as we have seen, also conceived of the rest of the frontier—Circesium on the Euphrates, fortified by Diocletian, and the walled cities of Arabia—in the same terms.[10] Ammianus, a Roman officer and a native of Antioch, born towards 330, must be our best witness to this final stage of the evolution of the military structure of Roman Mesopotamia, before the loss of its eastern section in 363. If we were to depend on his testimony, we would see Constantius' measures as *Caesar* under his father Constantine not as a reversal but as the culmination of Diocletian's fortification of the frontier.

So far as the Near East is concerned, therefore, there is nothing to support the hostile generalisation later made by Zosimus: that Constantine overturned Diocletian's policy of putting his forces in fortified cities along the frontiers, and withdrew them into the interior.[11] Though the earliest document distinguishing between troops who were *comitatenses* (serving in a field-army) on the one hand and *ripenses* (frontier-soldiers) on the other belongs to 325,[12] there is no evidence to illustrate any corresponding division of function on the ground in the Near East in this period. Nor can other generalisations made by Zosimus be confirmed. For instance, on his view it was Constantine who created the regional military commanders, called *magistri militum,* or *equitum* or *peditum* ('master of the soldiers', or 'of the cavalry' or 'of the infantry'). But none happen to be attested in the East until the 350s.

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[6] Zonaras XIII, 4.

[7] Ammianus XVIII, 9, 1, Loeb trans.

[8] For the *Chronicle of Edessa* see 12.3 and App. C below; Malalas, *Chron.* 323.

[9] See J. Matthews, *The Roman Empire of Ammianus* (1989), esp. 51ff.

[10] See 5.1 above.

Zosimus saw that change as a function of another, whereby the Praetorian Prefects lost their military commands (which in fact they had never had, in the sense of commanding whole armies), became responsible only for taxation and military supplies and had their responsibilities divided on a regional basis.[13] But again he seems to be retrojecting arrangements which did in fact come into being in the middle of the fourth century, but were only in their initial stages under Constantine. Even at the end of Constantine's reign only the provinces of Africa were under a genuine regional Praetorian Prefect. The four other Praetorian Prefects known to have been in office at this time seem all to have been serving with one or another of the Emperors: with Constantine himself as *Augustus,* and with the then *Caesares,* Constantius, Constantinus, Constans and Dalmatius. The Praetorian Prefect who was with Constantius in the East, apparently based at Antioch, may perhaps have been a Christian from Crete of humble birth, Flavius Ablabius. There are many uncertainties. But as it happens, we know that there were five of them in 336, for the whole group is recorded in a Greek inscription on a statue-base from Antioch erected in that year and representing the *Caesar* Constantinus: Papius Pacatianus (probably with Constans), Flavius Ablabius, Valerius Felix, Annius Tiberianus (the father of Saint Ambrose, then in Gaul with the *Caesar* Constantinus) and Nestorius Timonianus. But whether it was he or Ablabius who was serving with Constantius, and if so who (if anyone) was with Constantine himself, remains mysterious.[14]

In spite, or perhaps even because, of such puzzles, this document is not an unsuitable symbol of the stage in the evolution of the late-Roman system which had been reached by 336, as seen from Antioch. For if some of the details it conveys remain unclear, it still offers a snapshot of the highest level of the late-Roman administrative hierarchy at a moment when it was still in the course of formation; and it represents itself as the product of a college of five Prefects, all with senatorial rank, without making it explicit that they were scattered over the different regions of the Empire. But in another sense it is a perfectly typical product of the public life of a Greek city, in being a statue-base inscribed in Greek and carrying a representation of a distant Emperor.

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[11] Zosimus II, 34.

[12] *Cod. Theod.* VII, 20, 4.

[13] Zosimus II, 33.

[14] D. Feissel, "Une dédicace en l'honneur de Constantin II César et les préfets du prétoire de 336", *Travaux et mémoires* 9 (1985), 421. *AE* (1985), no. 823; *SEG* XXXV, no. 1484.

Though the structure of the Empire was thus in the process of transformation, the pattern of the civil government of the provinces of the Near East, like the military dispositions there, seems to have remained in the form established by the Tetrarchy. Again, we can see that structure, as it was a few decades later, in a brilliant sketch offered by Ammianus.[15] By then, and perhaps already under Constantine, Osrhoene was a province separate from Mesopotamia (both arrangements appear at different points in the third century); and the north-eastern part of Syria Coele, along the Euphrates, had by Ammianus' time become the province of 'Euphratensis', which included the two major cities of Hierapolis and Samosata. Ammianus' vivid description of the eastern provinces then lists 'Syria', with Antioch as its most famous city, but also with Laodicea, Apamea and Seleucia (thus the city foundations by Seleucus Nicator, to whom Ammianus has just referred, still dominant in the area). Next comes the province of Phoenice 'lying against Mount Lebanon', and containing the cities of Tyre, Sidon, Berytus, Emesa and Damascus (a division into 'Phoenice'—paradoxically the eastern part—and 'Phoenice Libani' or 'Augusta Libanensis', present in some lists, is unknown to Ammianus). Then comes Palaestina, with Caesarea, Eleutheropolis, Neapolis, Ascalon and Gaza (Jerusalem is mentioned only as having been taken by Pompey); and finally Arabia, with the walled cities of Bostra, Gerasa and Philadelphia. This to Ammianus was the *Orientis limes,* 'the frontier-zone of the East', starting in the north at Mount Amanus, stretching from the Euphrates to the neighbourhood of the Nile, and bordered on one side by the *Saracenae gentes* and on the other by the sea. Though, in true Graeco-Roman fashion, he saw the presence of Greek cities as the primary characteristic of any area, he was nonetheless aware of other and older elements in the culture of the region: he notes that Damascus had been 'founded in ancient times'. Just before, he also gives a vivid general account of Seleucus' city-foundations and their relation to the present:

> For by taking advantage of the great number of men whom he ruled for a long time in peace, in place of their rustic dwellings he built cities of great strength and abundant wealth; and many of these, although they are now called by the Greek names which were imposed on them by the will of

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[15] Ammianus XIV, 8, 5–13, Loeb trans.

> their founder, nevertheless have not lost the old appellations in the Assyrian tongue which the original settlers gave them.

Ammianus' view was, from our standpoint, a doubly retrospective one, set in his narrative of the 350s, but written at least three decades later. Contemporary evidence for the early decades of the century can provide no comparable picture (and above all the regime here of Licinius is hardly known at all). What evidence we have shows how the operations of the state were informed by quite new priorities: hostility to pagan practice, the enforcement of Christian morality and the glorification of the Christian Church.

Only a few illustrations will be needed here; a closer look at what the innovations and conflicts of Constantine's reign can tell us about the culture of the region belongs much later. But few inhabitants of the region can have been left unaware of the new uses to which the apparatus of the state was now being put. Some pagans might subsequently have felt that they envied the man and wife, from families with mixed Greek and Semitic names, who erected an elaborate tomb for themselves at a village in the limestone massif, north of Apamea:

> In year 636, on the 21st of Artemisios, Abedrapsos son of Dionysios and Amathbabea daughter of Eupolemos, his wife, finished the tomb, having shared life cheerfully, and they paid their vows to their ancestral gods. Be of good cheer, soul; no one is immortal![16]

The tomb was completed in May 325, the year after Constantine's victory over Licinius—and exactly at the moment when several hundred bishops were meeting for the Council of Nicaea. What Constantine's triumph was to mean was proclaimed in the greatest detail throughout the eastern provinces. A general letter to the provincials, declaring the Emperor's personal mission as a Christian, and the restoration of Christian persons and property, was followed by another denouncing the errors of idolatry, though commanding mutual tolerance.[17] The resources of the state were placed at the disposition of the bishops for the building and adornment of churches: Eusebius himself, at Caesarea, like other bishops, received a letter instructing him to draw the necessary materials 'from the governors (that is, the *praesides*) and the praefectural staff' (the office of the *Vicarius* of Oriens).[18] The new, two-level structure of civilian administration is visible again when Eusebius describes how Constantine instructed Macarius, the bishop of Jerusalem, to set about the construction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre: 'And as regards the construction and adornment of the walls, be informed that the responsibility has been entrusted by us to our *amicus* Dracilianus, the *Vicarius* of the Prefects, and to the *praeses* of the province'.[19] Dracilianus' predecessor was perhaps the Maximus who in 325 received instructions on the conditions under which town-councillors might be allowed to enter the army, posted at Antioch in July of that year;[20] in the autumn he received another, substituting, as a punishment for criminals, service in the *metalla,* instead of the 'bloody spectacles' of being forced to fight as gladiators. This was posted at Berytus on the first of October 325.[21] The motivation for the ban was clearly Christian, and in this still very Roman *colonia* the prohibition will have been particularly relevant.

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[16] *IGLS* IV, no. 1409, cf. 1410–1411.

[17] Eusebius, *VC* II, 24–44; 48–60.

[18] *VC* II, 46.

Equally appropriate, but in a quite different way, were the orders which Constantine gave to have the practice of castration banned in Mesopotamia: any slave who had suffered this was to be confiscated from his owner, along with the property where it had been carried out. The order was addressed, at an unknown date, not to a civil governor but to the *dux* of Mesopotamia—as it happens, the only *dux* in office in the Near East in these years who can be identified.[22] The practice cannot have been wholly unrelated to that of self-castration, which a king Abgar had banned in Edessa in the Severan period, perhaps as part of a policy of compelling his subjects to follow Roman customs.[23] If so, Christian and traditional Roman ideals and norms for once tended in the same direction, as applied to this predominantly Syriac-speaking region.

In general, however, Constantine's Christianising measures and legislation constituted a revolutionary reversal of the previous values and objectives of the state. This is not the place for a reassessment of the wider impact on pagan society and pagan cults of Constantine's Christian mission; many aspects of this—above all, the intended scope and the actual effectiveness of his attested ban on sacrifice—remain in any case highly controversial. Nor is it relevant here to follow the complex history of the Arian question as it affected the churches of this region, or the almost equally complex issues surrounding the bishopric of Antioch. But three aspects of the fundamentally changed nature of the relations of state and subject, as they unfolded in this region, do deserve mention.

The first is the Council of Nicaea in 325, not only because of its historic significance, but because it followed so closely on Constantine's defeat of Licinius, and meant the sudden elevation of a long list of local bishops to the visible status of Imperial favourites. In view of the conflicts which had always arisen over the demands of official travellers, it will have been one of the most deeply felt symbols of change that the letter summoning the bishops to Nicaea gave them the right to use the Imperial transport-service.[24] We should not underestimate the significance of this. For the list of bishops who came from the Near Eastern provinces provides a roll-call of the urban communities of the region (as well as raising the question as to whether all the places named can really have been independent *poleis*).

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[19] *VC* III, 30–32.

[20] *Cod. Theod.* XII, 1, 10.

[21] *Cod. Theod.* XV, 1, and *Cod. Just.* XI, 44, 1.

[22] *Cod. Just.* IV, 42, 1.

[23] 3.4 above and 12.5 below.

The list, though incomplete and subject to many problems, may nonetheless give an impression of what the Roman Near East 'was' in 325. The following places were represented:[25]

From Syria Coele: Antioch, Seleucia, Laodicea and Apamea (Seleucus Nicator's four major foundations); Hierapolis, Samosata, Neocaesarea (apparently a small place on the Euphrates), Doliche and Zeugma in the Commagenian region; Balaneae and Gabala on the coast; Larissa, Epiphania (Hama), Arethusa and Raphaneae (apparently now detached from Phoenice) in the Orontes Valley; Cyrrhus, Gindarus and Germanicia in the north, as well as an unidentifiable place whose name is transmitted as Arbocadama.

From Phoenice: Antaradus, Tripolis, Berytus, Sidon, Tyre and Ptolemais on the coast; Emesa in the Orontes Valley; Caesarea Paneas and Damascus; and Palmyra (as well as an unidentified place given as Alassius).

From Palaestina: Jerusalem, Neapolis, Sebaste, Caesarea, Ascalon, Nicopolis (Emmaus), Iamnia, Eleutheropolis, Maximianopolis (the former legionary camp of Caparcotna), Lydda, Azotus and Gaza; Jericho in the Jordan Valley; Scythopolis, Capitolias and Gadara, cities of the 'Decapolis'; Zabulon(?); and, as a reflection of the recent large southward expansion of the province, Aila at the head of the Red Sea.

From Arabia: Philadelphia, Esbous (Heshbon), Sodom(?), Bostra, Souedias (Dionysias), as well as a couple of unidentifiable places.

From Osrhoene and Mesopotamia only Edessa and Nisibis seem certain—and in general all these lists, reconstructed from a variety of later sources, can be taken only as roughly indicative. But as a visible symbol of the changed priorities of the state, it is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the summoning of scores of bishops to make their way from these provinces across Asia Minor to Nicaea, using official transport-services. Ammianus was later to claim that under Constantius the official transport-system had almost broken down under the weight of squads of bishops hurrying hither and thither to attend synods.[26] The impression made on observers in 325 will have been just as powerful.

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[24] Eusebius, *VC* III, 6, 1; cf. Millar, *ERW*, 327 and 595.

[25] For this list I have simply used A. von Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums4* II (1924), 660ff. (Coele Syria); 655ff. (Phoenice); 641ff. (Palaestina); 699ff. (Arabia); 678ff. (Osrhoene and Mesopotamia). See also D. S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Christian Antioch: A Study of Early Christian Thought in the East* (1982), App. I, "Eastern Representation at Nicaea".

Equally impressive symbolic changes were shortly to follow. One was the use of the resources of the state to build churches. We would miss the full impact of this unless we realised that, for all the respect paid by the Emperors of the previous three and a half centuries to the major pagan shrines of the provinces, actual construction of new temples by them—except in Rome itself—had been almost unknown.[27] Naturally, even now churches constructed on Imperial orders represented only a few key elements in a wave of construction, normally dependent on local initiative, which had begun already in the years following the proclamation of toleration in 313. Thus the sixth-century *Chronicle of Edessa* reports that in 312/313 Bishop Qona built a church there;[28] and the major literary monument of this hopeful phase in the early years under Licinius is the sermon which Eusebius himself delivered at the dedication of the Christian basilica of Tyre.[29] Nonetheless, the orders from Constantine for the repair of the existing churches and if necessary the construction of new ones, with resources to be provided by the provincial governors and the 'prefectural staff' (of the *Vicarius* of the diocese), represented a quite new phase in the nature of the state.

In deploying the resources of the state to advertise his own commitment to Christianity, Constantine's priorities were naturally shaped by the political geography of the pagan state itself. Apart from his new capital, Constantinople (placed at the central point of the route between the Danube and the Euphrates), his major Christian buildings were erected in Rome itself and in the Tetrarchic capitals of Nicomedia and Antioch: in Eusebius' words, 'that metropolis of the East which derived its name from Antiochus, in which, as the head of that portion of the empire, he consecrated to the service of God a church of unparalleled size and beauty'. This was the great Octagon, or Golden House, begun in 327 and dedicated in 341.[30]

By contrast, Constantine's building in and around Jerusalem imported a new element into Imperial priorities. A Christian conception of particular places and sites as being in themselves holy, and as worthy objects of pilgrimage, is attested even in the second century; and Eusebius' own *Onomasticon* reflects a heightened interest in the historical topography of Biblical history.

[26] Ammianus XXI, 16, 18.

[27] See S. Mitchell, "Imperial Building in the Eastern Roman Provinces", *HSCPh* 91 (1987), 333.

[28] See 12.3 below.

[29] The text is reproduced by Eusebius in *HE* X, 4.

[30] Eusebius *VC* III, 50; *Or. Triac* 9, 15. See G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria, Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (1961), 342ff.

But Constantine's ambitions and elaborate constructions, at the Holy Sepulchre, on the Mount of Olives and at Bethlehem, gave—or began to give—Jerusalem and its neighbourhood a centrality in Christian conceptions which it had never had before.[31] The record of his journey to and from the Holy Land in 333 left by a pilgrim from Bordeaux represents a new moment in Christian consciousness, and a new place for the Holy Land in the conceptual map of the Empire. The local details of that map had been marked out by lavish constructions erected on the Emperor's orders and using the resources of the state: the Bordeaux Pilgrim records the new Imperial basilicas which he saw at the Holy Sepulchre, the Mount of Olives, Bethlehem and the terebinth at Mambre near Hebron.[32]

This last also represented another very novel aspect of the role and ambitions of the state: the deliberate repression of pagan cult-activities at certain selected sites, sometimes accompanied by the actual destruction of temples. In the case of the Holy Sepulchre, a temple of Venus was destroyed to make way for the new church; and it should be stressed just how deliberate and visible a reversal of priorities this was. Whether or not tradition accurately recalled the location of Jesus' tomb, the site was one which had duly lain outside the walls of early first-century Jerusalem, as was required for a burial. The temple of Venus will have been a feature, along with the temple of Capitoline Juppiter, of the new Roman *colonia* of Aelia Capitolina, created by Hadrian; its boundaries extended further north than those of the previous city. The temple thus destroyed was therefore no mere local shrine, but a Roman temple deriving from the last real colonial foundation in the history of Rome.

Rather different considerations applied to the oak, or terebinth, of Mambre near Hebron, for it owed the Imperial attention given it to the tradition that it was there that God had first appeared to Abraham. But the site was now, as Constantine's mother Helena reported, disfigured by pagan idols and an altar. The removal of these, and the erection of a church, was thus simultaneously a blow against idolatry and a Christian claim to the inheritance of the Old Testament.[33] It is also a reminder of how complex a pattern of co-existence between different religious communities might mark this region. Eusebius' *Onomasticon* itself had identified different villages in Palaestina as being inhabited by either Jews, Christians or Samaritans. But he also notes, for instance, that near a large village between Jerusalem and Diospolis there had been a spring with an idol beside it 'worshipped by the natives'.[34]

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[31] See E. D. Hunt, *Holy Land Pilgrimage in the Later Roman Empire* (1982), esp. ch. 1; P. W. L. Walker, *Holy City, Holy Places? Christian Attitudes to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Fourth Century* (1990).

[32] *Itin. Burdig.* (*CSEL* XXXIX), 589–599.

[33] Eusebius, *VC* III, 52–53. See further 10.1 below.

The deliberate acts of destruction of pagan cult-centres ordered by Constantine were not confined to Palaestina and to sites rendered sacred by the Bible. But those that we know of were almost entirely restricted to the Near East as defined here; as so often, however, we cannot tell whether our knowledge simply reflects the limitations of Eusebius' perspective. The fact remains that he reports no case further away than Aegeae in Cilicia, on the other side of Mount Amanus. There, in a way never paralleled in the earlier history of the Empire, a detachment of soldiers destroyed the temple of Asclepius, 'whom thousands regarded with reverence as the possessor of saving and healing power'.[35]

That apart, the only two other places where we know that Imperial action was taken against pagan shrines were both in Phoenice. The first was something very characteristic of the Near East, a remote cult-centre at Aphaca on Mount Lebanon. Eusebius' words vividly evoke the special features of its location: 'This was a grove and temple, not situated in the midst of any city, nor in any public place, as for splendour of effect is generally the case, but apart from the beaten and frequented road, at Aphaca, a part of the summit of Mount Lebanon, and dedicated to the foul demon known by the name of Aphrodite'.[36] To Eusebius, what attracted Constantine's destruction of the temple, again carried out by a detachment of soldiers, was the homosexual intercourse and ritual prostitution practised there. His report serves to raise profound questions about the religious culture of the region. For should we see this cult-centre, whose remains lie high up on Mount Lebanon, at the source of the river Adonis (Nahr Ibrahim), as a surviving 'Oriental' or Semitic 'high place'? As everywhere, its architecture is of the Imperial period, and it is never mentioned in our sources until the third century.[37]

As we will see in many contexts, it is precisely Christian evidence which, for obvious reasons, first gives explicit accounts of many aspects of society and culture in this region. Precisely because it is Christian, it is not to be read as embodying mere reports, but as an interpretation of the hostile pagan universe of idols, 'demons', sacrifices and cult-practices with which the Christians found themselves confronted. Our difficulty in knowing what perspective to adopt is nowhere clearer than in the last instance which Eusebius gives, namely Constantine's repression of what seems also to be represented as ritual prostitution at Heliopolis: 'We may instance the Phoenician city Heliopolis, in which those who dignify licentious pleasure with the appellation of

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[34] Eusebius, *Onom.*, ed. Klostermann, 8.

[35] Eusebius, *VC* III, 56, trans. Richardson.

[36] *VC* III, 55, 2, trans. Richardson.

[37] See 8.4 below.

Aphrodite, had permitted their wives and daughters to commit shameless fornication'.[38] Unlike later Christian writers, Eusebius does not in this case say that force was used, or any temple destroyed. Instead he says that Constantine wrote to the city to forbid the continuation of such practices, and built what was apparently the first church there, manned by a bishop, a presbyter and deacons.

But 'Heliopolis of Phoenice' was in fact a Roman *colonia,* settled by veterans as part of the foundation of the *colonia* of Berytus under Augustus, and transformed by Septimius Severus into an independent city: 'Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Heliopolis'.[39] The deity to whom Eusebius refers as 'Aphrodite' can hardly be other than the 'Venus Heliopolitana' celebrated on Latin inscriptions from Heliopolis and Berytus, as are the two other best-attested gods of Heliopolis, Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus and Mercurius. Had the worship of Venus there always been simply a Latinised expression of a pre-existing worship of a female deity with a Semitic name, perhaps Atargatis? If so, had an 'Oriental' custom of ritual prostitution simply been taken over by the settlers? Or had the descendants of the original Roman veterans only gradually succumbed to the demoralising influences of their Oriental environment, to the point where their city could be perceived as 'Phoenician' in more than a purely geographical sense? Or, on the contrary, did Constantine's very circumspect approach in merely writing a letter (presumably to the magistrates and council of the city) and building a church reflect a Roman status which the city still embodied? Eusebius' brief account raises in acute form the question of what sort of city early-fourth-century Heliopolis really was.

That question, like many others, must remain for the moment unanswered; and, as with many others which relate to the culture of the Near East under Roman rule, we may have to accept that no unambiguous answer is possible. For the value of surveying the history of this region, and the progressive steps by which it came under Roman direct rule, does not lie in the presumption that such an approach, or any other, will necessarily take us far in determining whether there were distinctive common characteristics of the civilisation of this region, and if so what these were. Rather, a military and geographical survey, following the evolution of Roman rule step by step in chronological sequence, is essential, first, to defining the region, or slowly growing set of sub-regions, with which we are concerned. But second, and more important, a military and administrative survey serves not to answer but to pose in more acute form the question of the social and political structures, the patterns of religious beliefs, and the communal identities and loyalties of the population, or populations, with which the Roman state found itself confronted.

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[38] *VC* III, 58, 1, trans. Richardson.

[39] See 3.4 above and 8.4 below.

Many questions about the Roman state itself are raised by such a survey. Why was it that this region was the object of steadily increasing military investment by the Roman state, and was to become by the end of the period the prime area where the long tradition of Roman imperialism was still active? The novelty of the Imperial period was not the mere fact of Roman campaigns here. As far as the northern part of it was concerned, Mesopotamia and the city of Nisibis had already been captured by Roman forces under Lucullus in 68 BC. But Cassius Dio, recording this in the first half of the third century AD, can reflect a development of a quite different order, the long-term Roman implantation there: 'this city . . . is now ours, and has the status of a *colonia* of ours'.[40] Equally, it was only four years later, in 64 BC, that the first Roman pro-magistrate, Aemilius Scaurus, had come into contact with a king Aretas of Nabataea; and after a further abortive campaign in 62, Scaurus was subsequently, in 58, to issue coins representing King Aretas, quite falsely, as kneeling in submission.[41] The significant fact was not mere military contact, but rather the period of more than a century which followed, when the Roman Near East remained essentially a mere bridgehead based on the two main areas of Hellenistic city-foundations, northern Syria and the Decapolis; and then, by contrast, the new phase of expansion which began in the later first century AD and led to the creation of Rome's 'desert frontier', from the Red Sea to the Tigris.

Rivalry with Parthia and then Sasanid Persia, and the memory of Alexander's conquests, will explain some aspects of this development. Dio's image of Trajan as the only Emperor ever to reach the shores of the Persian Gulf, longingly watching a ship setting off for India, remains one of the keys to Roman Imperial history. But quite different considerations must have determined the Roman military investment in what was to become Syria Phoenice, and in Judaea—later Syria Palaestina—and Arabia. Quite different, that is, *unless* we were to think of these regions as inhabited by an 'Oriental' population which might look to Parthia or Persia as readily as to Rome. Such a view would certainly be grossly misleading. But we cannot dismiss so easily the evidence that trade-routes did lead eastwards through virtually all the areas to which Roman military occupation was extended—down the Red Sea, and through the Hedjaz, perhaps through the Wadi Sirhan, the route via Palmyra to the Euphrates, the route across Mesopotamia to Nisibis and beyond. That there was regular human movement between the Roman Near East and the Parthian and then Persian Empire is beyond question. But whether those contacts were significant for culture, attitudes or communal identities in the Roman area is quite another question, as is that of whether these trade-routes were themselves a motive for Roman expansion.

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[40] Dio XXXVI, 6, 2.

[41] For the coins, M. H. Crawford, *Roman Republican Coinage* I (1974), 446, no. 422.

That the Roman Near East could be looked at, in more than a purely geographical sense, as part of Asia, or 'the Orient', cannot be denied. The mere currency there of a group of related Semitic languages is sufficient evidence of that. But it was also an area of already long-standing Greek city-foundation and settlement. To look at the culture of any one of the sub-regions of the Near East is to see how profoundly the Greek language and Greek culture were rooted in the civilisation of this region. Any notion of a crude contrast between 'Greek' on the one hand and 'Oriental' or 'Semitic' on the other must seem wholly inadequate. Too much time had passed since Alexander's arrival in 332 BC. Yet the military history of the region itself serves to suggest that this contrast is not completely meaningless. The Roman forces here fought many successive campaigns, large and small, in contexts other than rivalry with Parthia or Persia: repeatedly in Judaea but also in Commagene, in Nabataea in 106, against Palmyra and finally, under Diocletian, against the 'Saracens'. But none of these operations was directed against a community or political formation which we would be tempted to characterise as unambiguously Greek.

Nonetheless, any attempt to understand the culture or cultures of the region in terms of a simple contrast between 'Greek' and 'Oriental' would be inevitably misleading. There is little or nothing to suggest that the supposed 'Orientals' shared any sense of common identity. On the contrary, everything shows that Jewish identity, whose maintenance is beyond question, conflicted rather than cohered with the identities of other groups using Semitic languages. Nor did these others show anything like the same capacity for survival. Whether anything distinctive remained of Commagene after the end of the dynasty, of Nabataea after it was made into the province of Arabia, or of Palmyra after Aurelian's reconquest is precisely one of the crucial questions we need to answer.

Equally, perhaps even more, puzzling is what appears to be a growing awareness, and a positive encouragement by Rome, of Phoenician identity. The Phoenician cities represent the one case—the Jews apart—where affirmation of a pre-Greek identity and history is clearly visible in the Imperial period. But was it this self-identification, shared even by inland cities like Emesa, Damascus and perhaps Palmyra, as 'Phoenician' which led Septimius Severus to resurrect 'Phoenice' as the name of a Roman province stretching to the Euphrates? Or was the sequence the reverse: that it was this artificial geographical division, with no historical roots, which provided a collective identity which had previously been lacking? Some explanation is at any rate required as to why Heliodorus, at the end of his novel *Aethiopica,* should have chosen to identify himself as 'a Phoenician Emesene'.

Yet the complexities of personal and communal identity do not end there. One of the most distinctive features of the period is the way in which many small places found themselves elevated, by Herodian kings or by Roman Emperors, into being Greek cities with Greek—or Latin-Greek—names. But this was above all a feature of Judaea/Syria Palaestina and Arabia: in each, for instance, there appeared under the Tetrarchy a new 'city' with the Latin-Greek name 'Maximianopolis'. But it was not a prominent feature of Phoenice: its major cities—Berytus, Sidon, Tyre, Ptolemais, Heliopolis, Emesa, Damascus and Palmyra—kept names which owed nothing to Rome. But then again, that is true only if we keep to the single geographical name used to locate them. For every one of these places in fact became in the course of the Empire a Roman *colonia,* and Heliopolis even owed its status as a city to Severus, as it did its full Roman name: 'Colonia Iulia Augusta Felix Heliopolis'. The impact of Roman measures, going far beyond the universal grant of Roman citizenship by Caracalla, is an important further influence on the curiously malleable identities of Near Eastern communities, and one whose significance has yet to be assessed. Above all, the military and political history of the third century, when looked at in detail, at least raises the question as to whether the 'empire of Palmyra', far from being an Arab uprising against Rome, is not to be explained as a movement led by a Roman senator from within a *colonia.*

Had it been *consciously* an 'Arab' movement, whatever that might have meant, it is hard to imagine that Vaballathus would have included in the list of victory-titles which he took as Emperor the name 'Arabicus'.[42] That would not of course mean that others in antiquity might not have seen the Palmyrenes themselves as 'Arabs', or even that we should not. How, and whether, we should use 'Arab' as a way of characterising the origins and true nature of any settled or urban groups in the Roman Near East is the most treacherous of all the questions which confront us. But what does seem clearly established is that ancient observers generally associated the term 'Arab' not with a language or culture but with an unsettled way of life, as they did even more clearly with the word 'Saracen'. Whatever else remains uncertain about the role of the Empire and its forces in the Near East, one thing is clear, that the long evolution of Roman military dispositions brought them everywhere into more and more direct contact with the 'Saracens' of the steppe. One indication of this is the changing geographical and military shape of Judaea/Syria Palaestina. Up to the second century the level of Roman forces there steadily increased; and it was there above all that the Roman army could be seen as an occupation force directed to the control of a civilian population. So it remained for perhaps a century and a half after the end of the great revolt under Bar Kochba in the 130s. But in the Tetrarchic period we find that the province has expanded to cover the southern part of Trajan's Via Nova; and the legion X Fretensis has left Jerusalem and moved to Aila. Most of the units, forts and walled cities which now constituted the Roman 'frontier' in the Near East were not now disposed so as to confront Persia, but along the steppe from the Euphrates to the Red Sea. That is not to say that we can simply characterise the army as it now was as a defence force positioned against external enemies. For Roman guard-posts lined the roads within the provinces also; and it is precisely in the fourth century that, from Sinai in the south to Mesopotamia in the north, vivid evidence shows that 'Saracens' were to be found within the provinces as well as outside. What looks on the map like a 'frontier' was also itself a police-system protecting roads. How we should see the tripartite relations of the Roman forces, the settled population and the 'Arabs' or 'Saracens' is precisely the most complex question raised by the military history of the Near East.

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[42] 4.3 above, text to n. 52.

CHAPTER
12

THE EUPHRATES AND MESOPOTAMIA

12.1. GEOGRAPHY, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

From the beginning of the Imperial period the Roman presence in the Near East extended as far as Seleucia on the Euphrates, more often called Zeugma, 'the bridge', where the river now marked the border between the Roman and the Parthian Empires.[1] It was only by successive stages that that presence was greatly extended. First it came to reach further along the river, both north and then south. To the north, the conquest of Commagene in the early 70s meant that Rome now occupied directly all of the cultivable area of northern Syria up to the Taurus Mountains. As far as the hinterland, stretching west to the borders of Cilicia and the meeting-point of the Taurus and Mount Amanus, is concerned, so little is known that nothing more need, or can, be said. But the capital of the kingdom, Samosata, lay directly on the Euphrates. In one direction, from the tell, or acropolis, of Samosata one could look northwards across the fertile plain where a succession of royal monuments were erected in the first century BC, to the mountainous skyline where the artificial royal tumulus on the summit of Nemrud Dag, at a height of over 2000 m, was visible 60 km away. In the other direction, one could look across the river to the rolling, and also fertile, plain of Osrhoene, a small kingdom which until the mid-second century was part of the Parthian Empire. It is not entirely surprising that the last king of Commagene, Antiochus IV, could be accused of dubious loyalty to Rome.[2]

Southwards, or south-eastwards, down the Euphrates, Roman control may have extended in the later first century to the confluence with the river Balikh (Bilēcha), which ran south from the Mesopotamian shelf, in the area where lay the cities of Edessa, the capital of Osrhoene, and Carrhae. But it was only in the 160s that Roman occupation was carried a long distance further south, past the confluence with the Chabur (Abouras), to include the small Macedonian settlement of Dura-Europos, which for the best part of three centuries had been a Parthian outpost.[3] Excavations there between the First and Second World Wars have produced a mass of evidence, still far from fully digested, which from the perspective of the Roman Empire has given it almost too great an importance. For it lasted as a 'Roman' place for less than a century, until its complete destruction by the Persians in the 250s. When Julian's army marched past it in 363, it was a 'deserted town in Persian territory'.[4] Roman territory now stopped at the confluence of the Chabur and Euphrates, where Diocletian had built the fortress of Circesium.

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[1] 2.1 above.

[2] 3.1 above.

Long before that, however, Roman control had extended across the Euphrates, to cover the whole of the shelf which lies between the Taurus Mountains and the Mesopotamian plain proper, finally to reach the Tigris. South of the shelf, or of the Jebel Sinjar which marks its southern edge in the east, it was only for a brief period in the third century that Roman forces found themselves stationed at the city of Hatra, the capital of a small kingdom which had formed part of the Parthian Empire. So far as we know, Hatra was never to be Roman again after its capture by Shapur I in about 240.[5] As regards the eastern part of the shelf, lying south of Mons Masius, an outlying spur of the Taurus (the Tur Abdin, later to be the heartland of Syriac monasticism), and including the city of Nisibis, Roman dominance was to be enshrined in the treaty with Persia in 298 or 299, only to be surrendered forever after the defeat and death of Julian in 363. Thereafter, the zone where Syriac Christianity flourished was to be divided, west of Nisibis, by the frontier between the two empires. Between the two treaties, of 298/299 and 363, however, the Roman military presence had also extended north of Mons Masius to take in an even less known area: the plain between the mountain and the Tigris, along the stretch where the river, on leaving the main Taurus range, turns almost due east, before swinging south round the end of Mons Masius past the eventual Roman fort of Bezabde to enter the north-east corner of the Mesopotamian plain. It was on this stretch of the Tigris, just before it turns east, that in the 330s Constantius, as 'Caesar' under his father Constantine, was to fortify the city of Amida (Diyarbakir).[6] Virtually nothing is known, as regards this period, of the culture, language or social history of this plain on the right bank of the Tigris, looking across the river to what was then the kingdom of 'Armenia', with its capital at Tigranocerta.[7] It was in a monastery near here that in the late eighth century an unknown monk composed a world chronicle in Syriac which, among much else, provides the fullest record of the royal dynasty which ruled in Edessa from the second century BC to the third century AD.[8]

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[3] 3.4 above.

[4] Ammianus XXIII, 5, 8.

[5] 4.2 above.

[6] Ammianus XVIII, 9, 1–2. Cf. 5.3 above.

Three different features serve to define the area with which this chapter is concerned. One is of course geography: the region is shaped to the north by the Taurus and its spurs, to the east and west by the Tigris and Euphrates, and (equally important) by the two major tributaries which run off the north Mesopotamian shelf to join the Euphrates, that is, the Balikh and the Chabur. The area of northern Mesopotamia which became Roman under Septimius Severus in the 190s is roughly defined by the edge of the shelf, or by the limits of 200-mm annual rainfall. The major cities of Roman Mesopotamia lie along the borders of the shelf and cluster round the upper reaches of the streams which feed into the two major tributaries: Edessa and Carrhae belong in the area of the scattered headwaters of the Balikh, and Constantina (if it was situated at modern Viransehir), Reshaina, Nisibis and also Singara, lying on the southern side of the Jebel Sinjar, in those of the Chabur.

As we have seen in looking at the military evolution of this area, these rivers have to be understood not as frontiers marking off blocks of territory, but first as providing strips of cultivable land, and second as offering routes through the uncultivable steppe on either side. In consequence the issue of relations between the settled population and the peoples of the steppe presented itself here in just the same terms as it did elsewhere. 'The same terms' in this context is meant literally: the same shifting vocabulary—'Arabes', 'skēnitai' ('tent-dwellers') and 'Saracens'—is used here as elsewhere.

The presence of these peoples is reflected in literary sources and documents from within both the Roman and the Parthian and then the Persian Empires, from Strabo's *Geography* to Ammianus' vivid account of Julian's dealings with the chiefs of the *Saraceni,* or Jerome's perhaps too vivid report of Saracen bandits infesting the road between Beroea in Syria and Edessa in Mesopotamia.[9] Unfortunately the account which Strabo, at the beginning of our period, gives of the route then taken by traders between northern Syria and Babylonia is filled with errors. But it is at least clear that he means to say that they did not follow the whole course of the Euphrates, but crossed over it, and only then travelled southwards, leaving the river a considerable distance to their right. The reason he gives, rightly or wrongly, is that the *skēnitai* living further east were less exploitative and more helpful than those along the Euphrates:

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[7] That Tigranocerta lay in this region, north of this stretch of the Tigris (and not in what was to be Roman Mesopotamia), is certain. See R. Syme, "Tigranocerta: A Problem Misconceived", in S. Mitchell (ed.), *Armies and Frontiers in Roman and Byzantine Anatolia* (1983), 61 = R. Syme, *Roman Papers* IV (1988), 245. For discussion of the precise location of the site, which clearly lay in this area, see T. A. Sinclair, *Eastern Turkey: An Architectural and Archaeological Survey* III (1989), 357ff.

[8] See further 12.3 and App. C below.

[9] 12.6 below.

> The Scenitae are peaceful, and moderate towards travellers in the exaction of tribute, and on this account merchants avoid the land along the river and risk a journey through the desert, leaving the river on the right for approximately a three days' journey. For the chieftains who live along the river on both sides occupy country which, though not rich in resources, is less resourceless than that of others, and are each invested with their own particular domains and exact a tribute of no moderate amount.[10]

The crucial factor which Strabo failed to make clear is revealed by his probable contemporary Isidorus of Charax, whose *Parthian Stations* traces the same route in more detail.[11] The rationale for this route was that travellers would cross over from Zeugma to the headwaters of the Balikh, and then travel down it to where it joined the Euphrates. A comparable route, though starting further south, from Hierapolis, was to be followed by Julian's army in 363. Either route was actually shorter than following the bend of the Euphrates.

Isidorus' account, brief as it is, serves to introduce the second significant feature of the social history of this region: like most other parts of the Near East, it had been profoundly affected by Hellenistic settlement, which in Isidorus' view had begun with Alexander himself. Thus in Isidorus' itinerary we find the following places listed, which either have Greek names or are explicitly designated as Greek foundations: Apamea, just across the river from Zeugma; Charax Sidou, '(called) Anthemousia by the Greeks'; Ichnai, a Greek city, a foundation of the Macedonians, on the river Balikh; Nikēphorion, by the Euphrates, a Greek city, a foundation of King Alexander; and then 'Doura, a city of Nicanor (properly Nicator), a foundation of the Macedonians; by the Greeks it is called Eurōpos'.

There is no need to pursue the scanty evidence on the actual historical circumstances of the foundation of these cities, or of other little-known places with Greek names scattered further up the Euphrates. It may, however, be relevant to note that the creation of places with Greek or Macedonian local names, or dynastic names, had been a tradition which persisted through the whole Hellenistic period. As it happens, perhaps the most perfect expression of that ideal comes from one of the immense royal inscriptions of Commagene, put up in the mid-first century BC. In the inscription which he ordered to be put up at Arsameia on the Nymphaios—a river which joins the Euphrates above Samosata—Antiochus I (*circa* 69–36 BC) recalled how his ancestor Arsames had exploited the potentialities of the site, a saddle between two peaks:

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[10] Strabo, *Geog.* XVI, 1, 27 (340).

[11] Text in C. Müller, *Geographi Graeci Minores* I (1855), 244–254; *FGrH*, no. 781; M.-L. Chaumont, "La route royale des Parthes de Zeugma à Séleucie du Tigre d'après l'itinéraire d'Isidore de Charax", *Syria* 61 (1984), 63. See esp. M. Gawlikowski, "La route de l'Euphrate d'Isidore à Julien", in *Géog. Hist.*, 77.

> This Arsameia which in the hollow between two breasts gives forth the spring Nymphaios of eternal waters, my ancestor Arsames founded as a city. As it lay by nature on two rocky hills, and as he perceived a god-given flow of nourishing water pouring forth into a deep cleft, he took advantage of the site, walled the double summit on either side, established a city around them, and called it Arsameia after himself. By increasing the impregnability of the fortifications by his own care and provision he created an unassailable base for his native land.[12]

Behind the flowery and poetic diction Antiochus manages to express rather accurately the military character of early-Hellenistic city-foundations, and of Hellenistic monarchy in general. He later claims to have added to the fortifications himself, as well as (a new motif) adorning the city. The monuments of the cult of his royal ancestors, most notably the great series of statues around the summit of Nemrud Dag, were also his work.

A city such as this, or another 'Arsameia' which lay directly on the Euphrates, at Gerger in the north-east corner of the kingdom, was—like the cities later founded by the Herodian dynasty—a tribute to the idea of the Greek city. It was surely not, as the earliest Hellenistic foundations under Alexander and Seleucus I had been, a colonial implantation of a Greek-speaking population in a 'barbarian' landscape. Seleucia/Zeugma, which in the middle of the first century had been controlled by the kings of Commagene, until the Romans took it over,[13] had, however, once been such a settlement. So, as Isidorus believed, had other places on the route to Babylonia, including 'Doura which the Greeks call Eurōpos'. To the very end, as we will see, the foundation of Dura by Seleucus I Nicator was to be formally recalled there.[14]

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[12] F. K. Dörner and Th. Goell, *Arsameia am Nymphaios* (1963), 36 (text and German translation), ll. 13ff. Here, as in all references to Commagene, I owe everything to the classic article of J. Wagner, "Dynastie und Herrscherkult in Kommagene: Forschungsgeschichte und neuere Funde", *Ist. Mitt.* 33 (1983), 177.

[13] 2.1 above.

[14] 12.4 below.

By that time, as it seems, Dura also enjoyed the status of a Roman *colonia*. In quite a significant sense the Roman military occupation, organisation and (in formal terms) 'colonising' of this region was to be a re-enactment of the early-Hellenistic occupation. For our understanding of what this Roman occupation meant for the region, it would therefore in principle be important to have some conception of how profound the impact of Greek settlement had been, and how far any of the cities on the Euphrates or in Mesopotamia still functioned, and still saw themselves, as Greek cities. Isidorus' *Parthian Stations,* written while the area was still part of the Parthian Empire, gives a strong impression of identifiably 'Greek' cities interspersed among other places with non-Greek names; very significantly, in view of what we have seen of settlement patterns elsewhere in the Near East, he gives several of these other places the label 'kōmopolis', 'village-city'.

In fact it has to be admitted that we have almost no significant evidence on the character of any of the 'Greek' cities of the region as they were in the couple of centuries before the definitive Roman occupation. The one exception is Dura, the only place from which there is archaeological and documentary evidence from both before and after the Roman conquest. Elsewhere, a major Hellenistic settlement on the Euphrates at Jebel Khalid is in the course of excavation; but it seems to have been entirely abandoned before the Roman period.[15] From the rest of the area there are only a scatter of documentary items of evidence from before the mid-second century—though, as we will see, of immense significance—and only later Syriac chronicles to offer some conception of internal history, of Edessa at least. There is no literary evidence in Greek from within this whole region until the provincial period. The one item that we have is again in Syriac. It is all too typical of the bias of our evidence that the few snapshots we have of the cities here derive from Greek narratives written in the Imperial period and describing the campaigns fought by the Romans here in the late Republic. These, moreover, have a notable tendency to emphasise the self-identification of the Greek cities of the Parthian Empire as 'Greek', and their consequent welcome and assistance for Roman armies.

The real history and the remarkably flexible and confused nomenclature, both Greek and non-Greek, of these places are matters of great complexity, and are not worth pursuing here.[16] The complications involved can be illustrated from a Byzantine dictionary of place-names: the third of ten different places called Antiochia was that 'of Mesopotamia, called "Mygdonia", which is called by the natives "Nasibis", whence there came Apollophanes the Stoic philosopher, a "Nasibēnos", and Pharnouchos who wrote a *Persian History;* which is also called "Nesibis" and "Nisibis"'.[17] But to Strabo 'Nisibis' was also called 'Antiocheia *in* Mygdonia', that is, it lay in the territory of a people whom the Macedonians had labelled 'Mygdones'.[18] To save even further confusion, it will be called 'Nisibis' here; but both its coins and one of the newly discovered Greek papyri of the mid-third century in fact call it 'Nesibis'.

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[15] For an interim summary see G. W. Clarke, "Australian Classical Studies and Mediterranean Archaeology", in R. Sinclair (ed.), *Past, Present and Future: Ancient World Studies in Australia* (1990), 1; or P. Connor, "A Fortified Macedonian Military Settlement at Jebel Khalid, North Syria, Excavations 1986–1987", in A. M. Tamis (ed.), *Macedonian Hellenism* (1990), 11.

[16] See, as always, Jones, *CERP*², ch. 9, "Mesopotamia and Armenia".

The Greek names of such places were usually either dynastic, like 'Antiochia', or borrowed from place-names in Macedonia itself. The place which continued to be called in Syriac 'Orhai' had both types of Greek name, 'Edessa' and 'Antiochia (on the) Callirhoe'. But for the question of what this identity as a Greek or Macedonian settlement might have meant in the Parthian period we are dependent, as mentioned, on narratives written under the Roman Empire. Thus it is claimed by Cassius Dio that in 65 BC the *legatus* of Pompey, Afranius, marching back to Syria through Mesopotamia, would have been totally lost if 'the Karraioi, being settlers of the Macedonians and living there', had not rescued him. There had indeed been an early-Macedonian settlement there; yet Carrhae, the ancient city of Harran, with its famous temple of the Moon-goddess, was precisely one of the places where the question of cultural and ethnic identity arises most acutely.[19] Later Dio reports more programmatically that when Crassus invaded Parthian territory in 54 BC, he quickly captured various Greek cities, including Nikephorion: 'for many settlers, (descendants) of the Macedonians and the other Greeks who had campaigned with them, held down by force and having high hopes of the Romans as being philhellenes, changed sides not unwillingly'.[20] A similar set of attitudes is implied when Plutarch describes how in 53 BC, when Crassus was defeated and killed near Carrhae, help was offered to his son by 'two Greeks from among those who lived nearby in Carrhae, Hieronymos and Nikomachos'; they urged him to flee to Ichnai, a *polis* which had taken the Roman side.[21] It would be a mistake, however, to build too much on the overtones of passing references in these later Greek narratives. Nisibis, as we saw, had also been a Macedonian settlement, as 'Antiochia in Mygdonia'. But when Dio describes how Lucullus besieged and took it in 68, he characterises its inhabitants as *barbaroi;* so when he adds that 'it is now (in the third century) ours and is classified as a colony of ours', he misses the significant truth that this was in fact a second western 'colonisation'.[22]

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[17] Stephanus Byzantinus, *Ethnica, s.v.* Ἀντιόχεια.

[18] Strabo, *Geog.* XVI, 1, 23 (747); cf. XI, 14, 3 (527), and Plutarch, *Lucullus* 32.

[19] Dio XXXVII, 5, 5; Diodorus XIX, 91 (Macedonian settlers already there in 312 BC). See W. Cramer, *RAC* XIII (1986), cols. 634–650.

[20] Dio XL, 13, 1.

[21] Plutarch, *Crassus* 25.

None of this evidence therefore tells us anything in detail about the communal structures or about the culture (or cultures) of these cities under Parthian rule. But the way in which Isidorus in his *Parthian Stations* chooses to characterise each place on the itinerary is clear evidence that the question of being a 'Greek city' or not was a significant one to contemporaries—or at least to other Greeks. It is surely relevant that Isidorus himself came from another small Greek city under Parthian rule, Spasinou Charax in Mesene on the shores of the Persian Gulf.[23] Any of these places might have continued to conduct themselves publicly as Greek cities, and to be treated as such by the Parthian kings. That this possibility was a real one is made certain by the letter in Greek written in AD 21 by Artabanus III of Parthia, and found on an inscription from Susa.[24] Perhaps surprisingly, the king, in addressing this Greek city in present-day Iran, does not use its formal title, 'Seleucia on the Eulaeus'; instead he writes to 'Antiochus and Phraates, being the *archontes,* and the *polis*'. But the body of the letter leaves no doubt that this is a Greek city with fixed rules governing the holding of magistracies, whose holders were expected to contribute out of their own pockets, and would receive appropriate honours in return. When the need arose, the city would send an embassy *(presbeia),* presumably to the king. It is somewhat paradoxical that this place, the ancient Persian capital of Susa, lying below the southern Zagros Mountains and some 1200 km from the Mediterranean, should present a more clearly defined image as a 'Greek city' than any of those on the Euphrates or in northern Mesopotamia which were to become part of the Roman Empire.

In any case, a 'Greek city' within the Parthian Empire might have a population which was clearly divided along ethnic, cultural or linguistic lines, as has been common in the Near East in more recent periods—but is *not* clearly visible in the cities west of the Euphrates, except in Judaea and its surrounding region. But precisely there, as we have seen, Josephus sometimes hesitates between describing the gentile population as 'Greeks' or as 'Syrians'. In the case of the other major city called Seleucia and lying within the Parthian Empire, however—that is, Seleucia on the Tigris—he has no such hesitation: 'At Seleucia life is marked by general strife and discord between the Greeks and the Syrians, in which the Greeks have the upper hand. Now when the

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[22] Dio XXXVI, 6, 2.

[23] See S. A. Nodelman, "A Preliminary History of Mesene", *Berytus* 13 (1960), 83, wrongly arguing, however, for a later first-century date for Isidorus.

[24] C. B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic Period* (1934), no. 75.

Jews came to live in the city there was continuing strife, and the Syrians got the upper hand by coming to terms with the Jews'.[25] It is of some significance that, just as 'Assyrian' can be used of people living in Roman Syria, 'Syrian' can be used of the non-Greek inhabitants of Parthian Babylonia. We have to assume, for lack of any other indication, that the most probable principle of division was linguistic: that the opponents of the (generally) dominant Greeks of Seleucia on the Tigris were speakers of a dialect of Aramaic. Similar divisions *may* therefore have existed also in those cities which did eventually come to form part of the Roman Empire.

Whether or not language in fact functioned, in the area which progressively fell under Roman control, as the basis of internal communal divisions—and even perhaps of wider political loyalties—it is the appearance of a new written language, Syriac, which provides the last of the three features which define the area concerned. Literary and documentary evidence, some very recent and still in the course of publication, shows that the emergence of this dialect of Aramaic, with its distinctive script, was something common not only to Edessa but to the whole Mesopotamian shelf up to and across the Tigris—and also, as was not known so clearly before, to the middle Euphrates as far south as Dura-Europos. For many reasons it will be at Dura that our investigation of the culture of the region begins.

12.2. DURA-EUROPOS IN THE PARTHIAN PERIOD

As was mentioned above, it is only at Dura-Europos that we have access to contemporary evidence to test any hypothesis about the life of Greek settlements under Parthian rule. But even here the difficulties are acute, perhaps more so than is generally admitted. For the excavations of the 1920s and 1930s were followed all too rapidly by publications offering very detailed, often bold, reconstructions of various aspects of the history, physical structure, religion and culture of the city, then by some but not all of the intended *Final Reports,* of which some are of the highest quality, on particular buildings and bodies of material. These have included a classic volume on the parchments and papyri (in Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Hebrew and Middle Persian), but none on the large number of inscriptions and graffiti, in a striking variety of languages: to be precise, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Syriac, Palmyrene, Middle Persian and Safaitic.[1] Without a full study of these, the particular questions which are raised in this book concerning communal and personal identity, or 'ethnicity', can only be sketched. It is an equally serious problem, however, that the entire range of identifications of buildings, reconstructions of building-histories and interpretations of the evolution of the city as a whole really need to be critically reviewed, rather than taken as the basis for the few general portrayals of the city which have so far been published.[2]

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[25] Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII, 9, 9 (374), Loeb trans.

[1] The best sketch of this profusion of languages remains G. D. Kilpatrick, "Dura-Europos: The Parchments and Papyri", *GRBS* 5 (1964), 215.

In very broad lines there is no reason to doubt that this settlement, situated on cliffs overlooking the Euphrates from the west, was established by Seleucus I, and will have involved the distribution of lots *(klēroi)* of land to individual Macedonian and Greek settlers, most probably discharged soldiers. Such *klēroi* are mentioned in the only significant document surviving from pre-Parthian Dura, a deed of sale of the second century BC; and a Greek parchment written in Greek in the last decades of the city's existence still contains a copy of provisions about succession, and the ultimate possibility of property reverting to being 'royal'.[3] From beginning to end Dura retained essentially its original gridded lay-out within an irregular polygon of walls whose longest side did not exceed 1000 m. There was an *agora,* but no theatre or any other building for public entertainment. The period of Parthian domination, from the end of the second century BC onwards, seems to have seen the construction of a number of temples, dedicated to deities with both Greek and non-Greek names (Atargatis, Bel, Adonis, Aphlad, Zeus Theos, Azzanathkona, Zeus Megistos); the characteristic plan is of a distinctive local type, a modest central temple in a courtyard lined with small rooms which sometimes functioned as subsidiary shrines. The absence of colonnades and of Greek-style masonry, and the concealment of the shrines within their courtyards, has led the excavators to see the origin of this type of sanctuary in Babylonia.

There is no reason to question this view, which obviously fits with the role of Dura for over two and a half centuries as a frontier town in the Parthian Empire. It was not, however, in any real sense a 'Parthian' town. There is nothing whatever to suggest that there was any introduction of Parthian settlers, or any large-scale immigration from other parts of the Parthian Empire (any such point has to be made with deliberate vagueness, for even less is understood of the ethnic or linguistic composition of the Parthian world than of the Roman Near East). While our evidence is wholly inadequate, what we have is compatible with the gradual and partial adjustment of a Hellenistic settlement to its local environment, and to the influence of traders and others from both east and west. Our conceptions of any social or cultural *evolution* of Dura is complicated by the fact, for which there seems no obvious explanation, that inscriptions, including those serving to date buildings, began on a significant scale exactly in the same period, the later first century BC, as in the Roman provincial area. So for instance the Palmyrene inscription dated to the Seleucid year 279 (34/33 BC), and recording the dedication of a temple (HYKL') to Bel and Iarhibol, is simultaneously one of the earliest Palmyrene texts and one of the earliest inscriptions from Dura in any language.[4]

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[2] See above all M. I. Rostovtzeff, *Dura-Europos and Its Art* (1938); A. Perkins, *The Art of Dura-Europos* (1973); C. Hopkins, *The Discovery of Dura-Europos* (1979). For the beginnings of a critical review of the excavations and the results to be deduced from them, see the papers in *Syria* 63 (1986), 1ff, and 65 (1988), 259 ff.

[3] *P. Dura,* nos. 15 (second century) and 12.

Both the inscriptions and the very important series of legal documents drawn up in the Parthian period show that Greek continued to be both the standard language of the population and the official language not only of the city government but of the Parthian royal administration. Officials with the Greek titles *stratēgos* ('general') and *epistatēs* ('overseer'), or in full form '*stratēgos* and *epistatēs* of the *polis*', are attested (perhaps) in the later first century BC, throughout the first and second centuries AD, and even into the early Roman period, although the function of *epistatēs* is very rare in the Empire.[5] The workings of the Greek administration of Parthian Dura are reflected, for instance, in a long Greek deed of gift of AD 87 and a mutual distribution of 85–89.[6] But almost everything about the wider framework, both of government and of society, within which the city then lived is expressed in a Greek loan-contract of AD 121. The text begins:

> In the reign of the King of kings Arsakes, benefactor *(euergetēs),* just, manifest *(epiphanēs)* and philhellene, year 368 as the king of kings reckons (the Parthian era), but by the former (Seleucid) reckoning [432], on the 26th of the month Daisios, in the village *(kōmē)* Paliga of the district around Iarda, in the term of office of Mētolbaissas . . . garrison-commander(?) and one of the First and Most Honoured Friends and of the Bodyguards (of the king), the eunuch Phraates, *arkapatēs,* one of the household of Manēsos son of Phraates . . . tax-collector, *stratēgos* of Mesopotamia and Parapotamia ('the district along the river') and *Arabarchēs,* made a loan to Barlaas son of Thathaios son of Ablaios, one of those from . . . village *(kōmē)* . . .[7]

The titles of the king and of his local commander perfectly express one aspect of the Parthian regime, as one late-Hellenistic monarchy among others. But, except for the Iranian word *arkapatēs* (the same term which appears as *argapet* in Palmyra),[8] and some Iranian personal names, we are in a social landscape very similar to that which we encountered in Roman Arabia. Here, however, the *polis* in question is not so much surrounded by villages as situated at a central point in a line of villages stretching along the Euphrates. The village called Paliga, where this Greek document was drawn up, is surely the *kōmē* called Phaliga by Isidorus, lying some 70 km up the river, just above its confluence with the Chabur. Beyond the zone of villages, as in Roman Arabia, lay the steppe. Even the office of *Arabarchēs,* 'ruler of the Arabs' (or perhaps 'of the 'Arab', the steppe), seems closely similar to the '*stratēgos* of the *nomades*' attested in the Hauran; and a similar office appears in Syriac at Edessa in the Parthian period.[9] The awareness of being on the edge of the steppe is indeed curiously reflected in a Greek loan-agreement of 134, described as having been drawn up 'in Europos by Arabia'.[10]

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[4] 9.4 above.

[5] See R. N. Frye, J. F. Gilliam, H. Ingholt and C. B. Welles, "Inscriptions from Dura-Europos", *YCS* 14 (1955), 127, on pp. 140–141.

[6] *P. Dura,* nos. 18–19.

[7] *P. Dura,* no. 20.

[8] 4.3 above.

Insofar as inscriptions and graffiti are any guide, Greek remained the normal language of daily use in Dura throughout the Parthian period. The question is of course complicated both by the systematic uncertainty as to whether people may not have spoken one language and used another for public, written documents, and further by the fact that the vast majority of the inscriptions, as well as parchments and papyri, date to the Roman period. What does seem certain, however, is that there was no consistent use of Aramaic in public documents to rival the role of Palmyrene at Palmyra; indeed the exception proving the rule of the public dominance of Greek is that those inscriptions and graffiti from Dura which are in a Semitic language are mostly in Palmyrene, put up by Palmyrene visitors or soldiers; like those from Palmyra itself, they are quite often bilingual with Greek.[11]

On the other hand the presence of long series of graffiti in Greek, for instance in the 'Temple of Bel' (formerly labelled the 'Temple of the Palmyrene Gods'), is supporting evidence for the view that Greek remained throughout a spoken language, and possibly the main one in use in the city.[12] It will be no surprise to find that Greek could be used both by people with Greek names and by those with Semitic names: for instance in the group of inscriptions from the 'Temple of Artemis' dating to the years before and after the turn of the eras, and giving the names of women: '(of) I[m]aboua daughter of Salamnēs, the daughter of Bēloobassaros and (of) [M?]ēkatnanaia daughter of P(?)apios the wife of Zebidadados, year 306 (7/6 BC)'—one of the earliest known inscriptions from Dura.[13]

As elsewhere, it is also highly significant that Greek could be used in inscriptions recording the worship of deities of a strictly local character, by people with Semitic names. Two well-known examples from the first and second centuries AD will suffice. The first is inscribed on a sculpted panel representing a priest in a conical hat and long tunic down to his calves, who is making a sacrifice to a bearded deity in full armour, who is standing on two griffins and carrying a staff in his left hand. The Greek inscription leaves no doubt about the identification:

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[9] 12.5 below.

[10] *P. Dura*, no. 22: ἐν Εὐρωπῷ τῇ πρὸς Ἀραβίᾳ.

[11] See du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire des inscriptions palmyréniennes de Doura-Europos (32 avant J.-C. à 256 après J.-C.)* (1939).

[12] See F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos* (1926), 369ff.

[13] Cumont, op. cit., 412, no. 57 (cf. nos. 58–68).

> This foundation of the sanctuary of Aphlad, called god of the village *(kōmē)* of Anath on the Euphrates, Adadiabos, the son of Zabdibōlos the son of Sillos, erected as his vow on behalf of the safety of himself, his children and all his house.[14]

Fortunately we are also left in no doubt as to the date. For an accompanying inscribed block gives the Seleucid year 365, AD 53/54, and names a group of men who dedicated an *andrōn* (whatever that might be in this context) to the god 'Apalados'. Their names are Baribagnaios son of Rachipnaios; Nabousapdos son of Abemmēs; Sabdisamsos son of Zabdibōlos; Naboudaraos son of Phalazzacheis; Abouis son of Zabidadados; Salamis son of Phalazzacheis; Roumēs son of Ochanou(-os?); Nabouazzanēs son of Rachipnaios; Theogenēs (the only Greek name) son of Zabidadados; Adadiadbos son of Zabdibōlos (the dedicator of the carved relief); and Addaios son of Phalazacheis.

Again, we see Dura as a focal point in a long line of villages stretching along the Euphrates; for 'Anath' is the place called Ana or Anatha, 80 km down the river, discussed earlier in connection with Palmyrene and Roman military outposts.[15] It is not certain whether the group of dedicants all came from there. But what is significant is that they could and did put up a visual representation of their local deity, with an accompanying Greek identification, within a Greek city. As with the document drawn up in Greek in the village of P(h)aliga, 70 km on the other side of Dura, it is probable that Greek was also used, at least as an official language, at Anath(a) itself.

A different form of expression of a local cult is provided by a Greek inscription from the temple of the goddess 'Azzanathkona'. Here at least the identification of the deity worshipped in the temple seems secure, for this divine name already appears on a Greek inscription from this building dating to the Seleucid year 345 (AD 32/33). In the middle of the second century, just before the final Roman acquisition of Dura, the cult was still being practised, but the deity had acquired a Greek divine name as well:

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[14] *Dura Report* V (1934), 112, no. 416, trans. C. Hopkins. The accompanying inscription is no. 418.

[15] 4.1 above.

> In the year 473 (AD 161/162), in the month Dios, Barnabous son of Zabidkonos the son of Raeibēlos erected a room *(oikos)* in the (temple?) to the goddess Artemis, called Azzanathkona, by his own expenditure, for the safety of himself and his children.[16]

Speculation on the etymology of the name 'Azzanathkona' is futile, and in any case would not necessarily tell us how the deity was understood by her local worshippers in the first and second centuries. If there is a clue, it is the relief sculpture from the temple showing a heavily robed goddess seated between two bulls, in a manner not unlike the Atargatis of Hierapolis. But, unlike Aphlad, the deity on this relief is not explicitly labelled.[17]

The temple architecture, the iconography of deities, the names of deities and the Semitic-Greek nomenclature of the population of both the city and the villages which stretched up and down the Euphrates on either side of it all indicate how a Greek-speaking Macedonian colony, originally settled more than four and a half centuries before the final Roman conquest, could give expression to the culture of its local environment. So far as we can determine, the culture of Dura in the Parthian period is best seen as that of the focal point of a settled zone along the Euphrates. There must also have been contacts with the *nomades* of the steppe, against whom the Palmyrenes fought to protect their caravans; but the only concrete trace of these is a small scatter of 'Safaitic' graffiti.[18]

What is clear throughout is that the public character of the city continued to be determined by its origins as a Macedonian colony. The religious iconography of both 'Parthian' and 'Roman' Dura showed indeed very clear resemblances to that of Hatra, in the Mesopotamian steppe 200 km to the northeast, and of Palmyra. But there was to be no parallel whatsoever to the long series of Aramaic inscriptions from second-century Hatra,[19] or even to the public bilingualism of Palmyra, which persisted even after it became a Roman *colonia*.[20] Nor do we find any parallel to the Syriac epitaphs of Edessa and its region, though it too had, as we have seen, a Hellenistic name (or rather two alternative Hellenistic names). But the geographical spread of the writing of Syriac and its relevance to the culture of Dura is a topic which has yet to be discussed.

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[16] *Dura Report* V, 177, no. 504 (inscription of AD 32/33); 142, no. 453 (AD 161/162).

[17] *Dura Report* V, 172–176, and Pl. XIV, for the representation of Atargatis of Hierapolis, 7.2 above.

[18] For Safaitic inscriptions from Dura see *Dura Report* II, 172–177.

[19] See H. J. W. Drijvers, "Hatra, Palmyra und Edessa: Die Städte der syrisch-mesopotamischen Wüste in politischer, kulturgeschichtlicher und relionsgeschichtlicher Bedeutung", *ANRW* II.8 (1977), 799; F. Vattioni, *Le iscrizioni di Hatra* (1981).

[20] 9.4 above.

Since, as will be seen, there are Semitic-language documents of various types from Roman Dura, it is important to stress that, the few Safaitic graffiti apart, the *only* common Semitic-language inscriptions or graffiti from Parthian Dura are Palmyrene ones, beginning with that of 34/33 BC, and in fact continuing into the Roman period. A particularly notable group of three Palmyrene inscriptions belongs to the latest period of Parthian Dura, when—in a context which is not entirely clear—Palmyrene archers were stationed in the city.[21] These inscriptions serve to identify the three figures represented on a deeply carved relief from the 'Temple of the Gadde'. On the viewer's left is the Palmyrene donor, labelled 'image (ṢLM) of Hairan son of Maliku son of Nṣor', making an offering on a small altar. On the right is a standing figure in armour, holding a staff in his left hand, and placing a crown on the central figure with his right. He is duly identified as the founder of Dura, Seleucus Nicator (SLWQWS NYQṬR). In the centre is the bearded figure, seated on a throne, of the Fortune (Tyche, or Gad) of Dura (GD' DY DWR'), made by Hairan in the year 470 (AD 158/159).[22]

An iconographic style comparable to that in use at Palmyra (not to say examples of Palmyrene art as such) was thus available at Dura. But if a comparable local dialect of Aramaic was in use, it was not deployed in public. Nor, equally, was 'Parthian' Dura in any real sense Parthian. The visible Iranian influences are minimal, and the Parthian dynasty expressed itself there as a late-Hellenistic kingdom. Nonetheless, as we have seen, the dominance of the Parthian Empire was clearly expressed there. So even if, as it seems, after the Roman conquest the 'Roman' garrison continued at first to be a Palmyrene one, the fact of incorporation into a new, much wider and quite different political structure must have been as evident in daily life in Dura as it had been in Arabia. But that recognition could be combined with a reassertion of the identity of Dura as a Hellenistic foundation, as is apparent in a Greek deed of sale belonging to the spring of AD 180:

> In the consulship of Bruttius Praesens for the second time and of Julius Verus for the second time, in the twentieth year of the principate of Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and the fourth of his son Imperator Caesar Lucius Aurelius Commodos, Augusti, and 491 of the former reckoning (the Seleucid era), on the fourth of the month Peritius, in Europos toward Arabia. In the year when Lysanias, son of Zenodotus and grandson of Heliodorus, was priest of Zeus; Theodorus, son of Athenodotus and grandson of Artemidorus, was priest of Apollo; Heliodorus, son

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[21] 3.3 above.

[22] *Dura Report* VII–VIII, 258–260 and Pl. XXXIII (the relief); 277, no. 907 (the inscriptions). Other related reliefs and inscriptions accompany this one. See du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire,* nos. 28–32.

> of Diocles and grandson of Heliodorus, was priest of the Ancestors; and Danymus, son of Seleucus and grandson of Danymus, was priest of King Seleucus Nicator. There has been sold by Lysias, son of Lysias, grandson of Heliodorus the great-grandson of Aristonicus, a citizen of Europos but resident in the village of Nabagath of the hyparchy around Gabalein, his slave named Achabus, about twenty years old, and there has been sold similarly the half-share belonging to him of the vineyard which is in the 'epiphyteutic' lands around the same Nabagath . . .[23]

We cannot in fact be certain whether these city cults represent elements of continuity which happen not all to be attested in Parthian Dura, or whether Roman rule was accompanied by the institution, or re-institution, of priesthoods serving to recall the Hellenistic past. But other forms of continuity are very evident. It is also striking that a citizen of Europos ('Eurōpaios') could be resident in a village *(kōmē)* which was so distant. For Isidorus tells us where Nabagath was: it was a 'village-city' *(kōmopolis)* near P(h)aliga, but apparently on the left bank of the Euphrates, for 'the river Abouras (Chabur) flows past it, which joins the Euphrates'. It will thus have been some 60 km from Dura; we encountered earlier another deed of sale from Dura which reveals vineyards and orchards beside the Chabur.[24] But before we look more closely at the newly 'Roman' area of the Euphrates, the Chabur and northern Mesopotamia created by the absorption of Commagene by Vespasian and then by the conquests of Septimius Severus, we need to look at other aspects of its history before it was absorbed by Rome.

12.3. THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES AND THE COMING OF ROME

In some parts of the Euphrates region, such as Commagene, nothing approaching an answer to questions about local culture is possible. It is true that the very distinctive evidence presented by the long Greek inscriptions, and by the sculptures and reliefs of the royal dynastic cult, consciously identifies the dynasty as embodying both Greek and Persian traditions.[1] But this material is exclusively royal, and in any case none of it postdates the third quarter of the first century BC. The sole indication we have that the dynasty of the first century AD had any roots in popular loyalty is Josephus' report that in AD 17, when Antiochus III died, the 'powerful' wanted the kingdom to be made provincial, but the mass of people preferred 'to be ruled by kings according to their ancestral custom'. Yet when Roman forces marched in in the early 70s, though the royal army resisted quite effectively, the population remained passive.[2]

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[23] *P. Dura*, no. 25.

[24] *P. Dura*, no. 26 (AD 227); 4.1 above.

[1] See the major paper by Wagner, 12.2, n.12, above.

Since we have hardly any local evidence from either before or after the Roman acquisition of Commagene, *a fortiori* we have no way of assessing what the change from royal to Imperial rule will have meant. Moreover, the one place in the interior of Commagene from which we do have some very distinctive local evidence, Doliche, on the southern edge of the region, seems to have been incorporated into the province of Syria by the middle of the first century; perhaps indeed already from 31 BC, at the same time as Zeugma, which lies some 40 km to its east-south-east.[3] Under Antiochus I (*circa* 69–36 BC), it had certainly belonged to the kingdom, as a fragmentary inscription of his cult-regulations shows.[4]

Elsewhere, apart from the great monuments and inscriptions of the royal ancestral cult, the archaeological and epigraphic record of Commagene is almost a blank. Perhaps our sole significant reflection of the social history of this period is a newly published Greek tomb-inscription from the heart of the kingdom, a village now called Sofraz Koy, some 45 km west-north-west of Samosata.[5] The builder of the tomb, a man with a Latin name, 'Markellos', records seven generations of his family: his great-great-grandfather Antiochos; his great-grandfather Mithridates, a royal official *(monokritēs),* and his wife Laodikē; his grandfather, apparently called Takitos (Tacitus), and the latter's wife Apsebis, the daughter of Antas; his father Sakerdōs, and his wife, another Laodikē; then his own generation, including his sisters Laodikē and Apsebis, and his wife Markellē; his own son, another 'Sakerdōs', and his granddaughter, another 'Markellē'. The genealogy seems to cover roughly the period from the earlier first century BC to the later first century AD—though whether the inscription itself belongs before or after the conquest is uncertain. On any dating it demonstrates a remarkable combination of typical Hellenistic dynastic names with an early introduction of Latin personal names. It may not be mere speculation to see this in relation to the preparedness of the 'powerful' in AD 17 to accept provincial rule.

That apart, we have only the most slight and superficial indications of the communal structures which marked the provincial period. Under the Flavians—and probably under Vespasian himself—Samosata, the royal capital, became 'Flavia Samosata', and from Hadrian's reign onwards issued coins inscribed 'of the Flavian Samosateans, mētropolis of Commagene'.[6] No other city from within the final borders of the kingdom did so. It is thus not certain which (apart from Samosata) were the 'four *civitates* of Commagene' which honoured Septimius Severus on a Latin inscription put up on the columns erected on the still perfectly preserved Roman bridge over the river Chabinas.[7]

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[2] Josephus, *Ant.* XVIII, 2, 5 (53); *BJ* VII, 7, 1–3 (219–243).

[3] 7.2 above.

[4] See J. Wagner, "Neue Denkmäler aus Doliche", *Bonn. Jahrb.* 82 (1982), 3, on pp. 161ff.

[5] G. Schmitz, S. Sahin and J. Wagner, "Ein Grabaltar mit einer genealogischen Inschrift aus Kommagene", *Epig. Anat.* 11 (1988), 81.

[6] *BMC Syria,* 117–123.

This rich and beautiful region occupies the angle between the Euphrates and the Taurus Mountains, where the tumulus on the summit of Nemrud Dag is clearly visible on the horizon from Samosata. Whether the population as a whole regretted the royal dynasty, we cannot know. But since the great monuments on Nemrud Dag and elsewhere are still to be seen today, they must have been features of the landscape then too. Equally, though we have hardly a trace here of the epigraphic, documentary or archaeological evidence for village life which is so abundant in other areas, this too must have been a world of villages; if anything, they should have been more prosperous than elsewhere. Perhaps our sole epigraphic trace of such a village community is the fragmentary Tetrarchic inscription recording the boundary between a village, or village-community, called Ardoula or Ardouloi and some other community whose name cannot be read.[8]

But between them these two facts—the still visible reminders of a royal dynasty, and the unquestionable existence of a large village population—combine with a third to raise real questions about the culture of this region as part of the Roman Empire. The third fact is simply that the whole area looked directly across the Euphrates to Osrhoene. It was perhaps less significant (except to the final Roman suspicions of Antiochus IV) that Osrhoene was part of the Parthian Empire until the 160s, as that before and after that date it was the birthplace of the Syriac language, script and literature. That being so, *can* it have been the case that some dialect of Aramaic was not spoken also in Commagene?

The question presents itself with particular urgency, of course, because of what is said of himself and his background by Lucian (Loukianos) of Samosata.[9] As we have seen, he introduces his famous account—a parody of Herodotus—of the 'Syrian Goddess' at Hierapolis both by identifying her as 'the Assyrian Hera' and by saying of himself, 'I write being an Assyrian'.[10] Elsewhere, writing of himself in the third person, he describes himself as 'still barbarous in speech and almost wearing a jacket *(kandys)* in the Assyrian style'. He might at the same point have written 'Syrian'—and indeed does so in the same dialogue, and elsewhere; the one term was simply a more affected version of the other.[11] None of these brief allusions would give us any idea of exactly where he came from. One other remark takes us further, when he calls himself 'a Syrian, one of those from the banks of the Euphrates'.[12] But it is only in one single place that he names his native city. The context is significant, for it is his satirical account, entitled *How to Write History,* of the absurdly inaccurate and overblown works written to record and celebrate the Parthian war fought by Lucius Verus in 162–166.[13] Some of these writers had not the remotest notion of the geography of the area:

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[7] *IGLS* I, nos. 42–44.

[8] *IGLS* I, no. 59. From Atyntas-qale, some 40 km north-west of the confluence of the river Marsyas and the Euphrates. See App. A, no. 1, below.

[9] For the best account see C. P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (1986).

[10] Lucian, *de dea Syr.* 1. Cf. 7.2. above.

> One man, for example, who had never met a Syrian nor even heard as they say 'barber-shop gossip' about such things, assembled his facts so carelessly that when speaking of Europus he said: 'Europus is situated in Mesopotamia, two days' journey from the Euphrates; it was colonised by men of Edessa'. Even this was not enough for him: my own birthplace, Samosata, this fine writer in the same book lifted, acropolis, walls and all, and transplanted to Mesopotamia, so as to surround it by both rivers, which passed close to it on either side and almost touched the walls.[14]

The acropolis (in fact an ancient tell) and walls of Samosata are visible still, or will be until the Euphrates dam drowns them forever. This is not quite Lucian's only allusion to his city; but his essay 'Praise of One's Patris' is wholly general, and might have related to any city.

We cannot in fact expect that a sophisticated Greek writer of the second century AD would ever offer us an analysis of the local culture of his home region. For precisely the nature (and, in a sense, the purpose) of the Greek culture of this period was that it was not regional; the style, vocabulary, literary forms and conventions of allusion (to the common stock of mythology, to Archaic and Classical literature and to Classical history) which defined it made it a common, supra-regional culture. The reader of the vast majority of Lucian's works would be wholly unable to tell from what part of the Greek world he came.

Even in *On the Syrian Goddess,* where he begins by claiming to be 'Assyrian' like the goddess herself, he actually adopts the literary standpoint of the bemused stranger, witnessing an exotic cult from the outside. It is thus only when local knowledge becomes relevant to Roman campaigns that he makes a specific point of his origin in Samosata. The other, oblique, allusions to his being a 'Syrian' or an 'Assyrian' contain by implication a concealed apologia. For they stress the distance, literal and figurative, which he had needed to

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11. *Bis accus.* 27 ('Assyrian'); 14; 25–34; *Ind.* 19.
12. *Pisc.* 19: Σύρος . . . τῶν Ἐπευφρατιδίων.
13. Cf. 3.4 above.
14. *Hist.* 24, Loeb trans.

travel in attaining the *paideia* which made him an accomplished writer.

The unfortunate effect of these allusive and defensive references, as regards our knowledge of his background, is that we cannot tell, either from remarks about being 'Assyrian' or 'Syrian' or from the one reflection of his having been 'barbarous in speech', whether he is referring to a still unpolished style of Greek or to his having, in youth, spoken a dialect of Aramaic. Attractive as it might be to think of the Greek of the most accomplished of second-century writers as a second language, laboriously acquired, the first possibility is more likely. We still do not *know* whether Lucian, or anyone else in Samosata, or in Commagene generally, spoke a dialect of Aramaic.

That possibility must, however, remain open, for even without the documentary evidence now available we could be sure that some Semitic language, and perhaps more than one, was spoken on the other side of the Euphrates. As we saw earlier, Strabo, in part depending on Posidonius, speaks of the affinity of customs and language between the 'Armenioi', 'Syrians' (or 'Arimaioi' or 'Arammaioi') and 'Arabes', and notes that it was in Mesopotamia that they lived in the closest conjunction.[15] Pliny the Elder also gives a clear impression of the area, emphasising both its 'Arab' character and the presence in it of cities with Greek names. The Euphrates, he says, once it has broken through the Taurus, forms the boundary between Commagene on the right bank and 'Arabia' on the left, namely the district called 'that of the Orroei' (transliterating a Greek genitive plural which comes close to the Syriac name of Edessa, Orhai—'WRHY). He then continues:

> The 'Arabia' mentioned above contains the *oppida* Edessa, which was once said to be 'Antiochia', called 'Callirhoe' from its spring, (and) Carrhae, famous for the disaster of Crassus. Next comes the *praefectura* of Mesopotamia which owes its origin to the 'Assyrii', in which are the *oppida* Anthemusia and Nicephorium. Then the 'Arabes' who are called 'Praetavi'; their capital is Singara.[16]

As will be seen, Pliny here covers some of the same ground as Isidorus, though not in the more precise form of an itinerary with distances, or with any awareness of the rivers, the Euphrates apart. We would gain from him a clear, and for what follows quite significant, impression of the variety not only of peoples but of political units (all, though he does not say so, under Parthian suzerainty). We would not, however, gain any impression that at Edessa, in the 'Arabia' of the 'Orroei', there was a stable dynasty of 'phylarchs' or kings, often with the name 'Abgar(os)' or 'Mannos', whom later Syriac sources record, and who appear from time to time in Graeco-Roman narratives of the conflicts between Rome and Parthia.[17] But none of these narratives gives any clear indication of how far the territory of these kings extended. Pliny's impression of a number of separate territories seems indeed to be correct. For when Trajan advanced into Mesopotamia, Cassius Dio reports that he encountered not only 'Augaros' (earlier called the 'Orroēnos') at Edessa, but also envoys from 'Mannos, the ruler of the neighbouring part of Arabia'; none, however, were sent by Sporakes, the *phylarchos* of Anthemousia.[18]

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[15] Ch. 1 above.

[16] Pliny, *NH* V 20/85; 21/86.

This is no need to go in vain pursuit of the question of exactly what these various political regimes amounted to; they will in any case no doubt have been fluid and changeable. But it is important to stress that we have no reason to think that the rule of the kings of Edessa, the place with which the birth of Syriac literature is most closely associated, extended over all of north-western Mesopotamia, or to the entire left bank of the Euphrates between Zeugma and the mouth of the Balikh. This uncertainty has to be borne in mind when we look at the tiny scatter of evidence which attests the use of the Syriac language and script in the first century AD.

The earliest known text, by a considerable margin, is an inscription from a very significant location, the modern Birecik on the left bank of the Euphrates, lying a few kilometres south of Zeugma, and where the modern road to Urfa (Edessa) crosses the river. It is defined as 'Syriac' by its use of the rounded semi-cursive script known as 'Estrangela' (from the Greek 'strongylos', 'rounded'), which bears some resemblance to the script of Palmyrene inscriptions.[19] (As we will see, these two scripts were to meet at Dura.) Estrangela was the script in which all the earlier Syriac manuscripts were to be written, from the earliest known literary manuscript, copied at Edessa in AD 411, until the eighth century. After that it was gradually replaced as the most common script by that called 'Serta', more cursive and closer to Arabic.[20] It is somewhat typical of the many barriers which present themselves in any attempt to grasp the evidence for the earlier stages of Syriac culture that the standard edition of the first Syriac parchment of the third century to be published—itself written in a cursive script which more closely resembles Estrangela—presents the text in Serta, thus obscuring the fact that there is some relationship between its script and that of contemporary Syriac (and Palmyrene) monumental inscriptions.[21] In view of the allusiveness and lack of up-to-date aids which characterise early Syriac studies, a basic guide to the material and its bibliography is offered at the end of this volume.[22]

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[17] For example, Plutarch, *Crassus* 21–22 (φύλαρχος Ἀράβων, Ἀριάμνης ὄνομα), apparently the same as the Αὔγαρος ὁ Ὀρροηνός of Dio XL, 20, 1, the betrayer of Crassus in 53 BC; Tacitus, *Ann.* XII, 12 ('rexque Arabum Acbarus', AD 49).

[18] Dio LXVIII, 18 (Augaros the 'Orroēnos'); 21, 1–22, 1.

[19] See J. Pirenne, "Aux origines de la graphie syriaque", *Syria* 40 (1963), 101, with much comparative material, and rather wide-ranging speculations.

[20] See W. H. P. Hatch, *An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts* (1946).

Given its historic significance, as the first evidence for a script, or family of scripts, and language which persist to this day, the earliest of the known Syriac inscriptions deserves translation:

> In the month of Adar of the year 317 I, ZRBYN BR 'B[GR?], ruler of Birtha (ŠLYṬ' DBYRT'), tutor (foster-father?) of 'WYDNT [BR] M'NW BR M'NW, made this tomb (BYT QBW[R']) for myself and for ḤWY', mistress of my house, and for my children . . . every man (KL 'NŠ) who will enter . . . and shall see and give praise . . . HŠY sculptor (GLP') and SLW[K?] (Seleukos?) . . .[23]

The inscription thus records that a tomb for himself and his family was erected in AD 6; as at Palmyra, in Mesopotamia dating by the Seleucid era of autumn 312 was standard. The person concerned was an important local figure who is in command of Birtha (literally 'fortress'), that is, presumably, of the place on the site of Birecik. Though he has also been tutor (MRBYN') of someone whose father and grandfather were both called Ma'nu (Mannos), a common name in the royal dynasty of Edessa, there is no explicit reference to any current king. It remains very probable, nonetheless, that this is not an independent local ruler, but an official of the kingdom. We saw earlier how in AD 49, according to Tacitus, 'the king of the Arabs, Acbarus', met the Parthian pretender Meherdates at Zeugma and took him to enjoy the delights of Edessa.[24]

If, as is not quite certain, the earliest Syriac document already reflects the political structure of the kingdom of Edessa, this is less clear in the case of the next in time, which dates to the Seleucid year 385, AD 73/74.[25] This comes from a fine stone-built tower-tomb situated at a place called Serrin, approximately opposite the ancient Hierapolis, on the other side of the Euphrates, and thus some 70 km to the south of Birecik. From the discussion above of the various minor political structures attested in western Mesopotamia, this area is more likely than not to have been outside the kingdom of Edessa. But, although Edessa is the place most closely associated with the early stages of Syriac literature, there is no obvious or necessary connection between political boundaries (which in any case were all those of local dynasts under Parthian suzerainty) and the areas where particular dialects or scripts were in use. The inscription is again of a common type, recording the construction of a tomb (NPŠ') by someone for himself and his sons, and cursing anyone who disturbs it. This man also has a characteristic Edessan name, Ma'nu son of Ma'nu, and is described as QŠYŠ' (priest?) and BDR DNḤY, whose meaning is unknown.

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[21] *P. Dura,* no. 28, and Pls. LXIX and LXXI. First edited (also in Serta) by Ch. C. Torrey, "A Syriac Parchment from Edessa of the Year 243", *Zeitschr. f. Semitistik* 10 (1935), 33. It is printed in Estrangela in H. J. W. Drijvers, *Old-Syriac (Edessean) Inscriptions* (1972), 54–57.

[22] App. C.

[23] Drijvers, *Inscriptions,* no. 1; translation from J. B. Segal, *Edessa, 'the Blessed City'* (1970), 23, n.3. A photograph of a squeeze of the text in A. Maricq, "La plus ancienne inscription syriaque: Celle de Birecik", *Syria* 39 (1962), 88, Pl. III (and of that from Serrin, discussed below, Pl. IV).

[24] Tacitus, *Ann.* XII, 12, 4; 2.3 above.

[25] Drijvers, *Inscriptions,* no. 2; translated in Segal, *Edessa,* 23, n.4. A photograph of the tomb in Pirenne, op. cit., *Syria* 40 (1963), 110.

When all allowances are made for the accidents of discovery (in a region between the Euphrates and the Balikh which has been very little explored), it is surely not entirely accidental that these two first-century Syriac inscriptions belong within the same period as the other earlier series of inscriptions in Semitic languages, from Palmyra and Petra, and happen to match almost exactly the time-spread of the dated Nabataean tomb-inscriptions of Medain Saleh. They are, in other words, a function of building activity, all conducted in sub-Hellenistic style. But the fact that Syriac had a future as a literary language, which Palmyrene and Nabataean did not, cannot but give these two isolated inscriptions some extra significance. They also serve, however, to raise other questions. When did literary composition in Syriac begin, and was it in fact associated with Edessa in particular?

Nearly all the earlier Syriac literature, like the coins of the Edessene kings, and the vast majority of the dated inscriptions, belongs to the period after Edessa had passed into Roman domination in the 160s, and then under direct provincial rule in 212/213. Since it was also in the 160s that Dura became 'Roman', this represents a different phase in the history of the region, within which both places will be treated in parallel. But do we have evidence for the literature or history of the region east of the Euphrates before it came under Rome? The question has to be approached in two quite different ways. First, again, is there any literature which itself derives from this area in this period? And second, is any real evidence about it to be derived from later narratives, whether in Syriac or in Greek?

There is no known literature in Greek from within this region before the 160s, any more than there is from Palmyra or Nabataea/Arabia. There might have been. Isidorus of Charax, as we saw, came from a Greek city in Mesene on the shores of the Persian Gulf. Greek sculpture was also to be seen there. An already famous, newly published bilingual inscription of Vologaeses IV of Parthia, in Greek and Parthian, on a statue of Herakles records how he brought this statue as booty when he reconquered Mesene in the mid-second century.[26] Greek writing might well have emanated from Dura, Nikephorion, Anthemousia, Carrhae, Nisibis or Edessa. Indeed, as we saw earlier, it has often been believed that the major Christian Greek writer of the mid-second century, Tatianos, actually came from within the Parthian Empire. But the evidence is simply that at the end of his *Address to the Greeks,* he describes himself as (now) 'philosophising in the style of *barbaroi* (that is, Christians), born in the land of the *Assyrioi,* but first educated in your (that is, the pagan) manner'. In reality he no more came from 'Assyria' (Adiabene on the Tigris, or Babylonia?) than did that other 'Assyrian' with a Latin name, Loukianos from Samosata. The point is of some significance, for two reasons. First, the harmony of the Four Gospels which Tatian composed, the *Diatessaron,* was much used and commented on later, in a Syriac version, by Syriac Christian writers; Ephrem, born in Nisibis in the early fourth century, wrote a commentary on it.[27] But the Greek title of the work suggests that he wrote it, or composed it, in Greek. The deduction is surely made more probable by the fact that a fragment of it in Greek was discovered at Dura; it is thus one of the very few ancient literary texts which date to within a century of the time of composition.[28] Second, as will be seen, the early history of Syriac-speaking Christianity at Edessa is immersed in legend.

Nonetheless, there is no reason in principle why we should not have testimony in Greek from east of the Euphrates, written before the last part of the second century, even if Tatianos' *Address* is not in fact an example of it. There seems, however, to be none available. But there is a brief text in Syriac, of exceptional interest, which may possibly derive from this place and time. This is the *Letter of Mara bar Serapion* ('GRT' DMR' BR SRPYWN) addressed 'to my son Serapion' (LSRPYWN BRY ŠLM). It is known from a single manuscript, which also contains the *Book of the Laws of Countries,* the *Oration of Meliton the Philosopher* and other texts, and was written in the seventh century in Estrangela; the *Letter* has been published only once, in 1855, in Serta.[29]

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[26] For the statue see W. I. Al-Salihi, "The Weary Hercules of Mesene", *Mesopotamia* 22 (1987), 159, and for the inscription F. A. Pennachietti, "L'iscrizione bilingue greco-partica dell' Eracle di Seleucia", ibid., 169.

[27] On Tatianos, see briefly ch. 6 above. To his near-contemporary Clement of Alexandria, Tatian was a Σύρος, which of course leaves the question of his geographical origins open, *Strom.* III, 12, 81. It is only the unreliable and fanciful Epiphanius, *Panar.* XLVI (and cf. *Anaceph.* 3, 46), in the late fourth century, who deduces from what Tatian says of himself that he came from Mesopotamia. For the currency of the *Diatessaron* in Syriac see I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Patrologia Syriaca*^{2} (1965), 35ff. and 61–63 (Ephrem's commentary). For a full discussion see W. L. Petersen, *The Diatessaron and Ephrem Syrus as Sources of Romanos the Melodist* (1985), ch. 2.

[28] *P. Dura,* no. 10. Note, however, that W. L. Petersen, "New Evidence for the Question of the Original Language of the Diatessaron", in W. Schrage (ed.), *Studien zum Text und Ethik des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift H. Greven* (1986), 325, argues strongly for a Syriac original.

No precise date or place of origin of the *Letter* can be determined. Nor can it be quite certain that a literary composition such as this, cast in the form of a letter of consolation, actually did arise from a concrete situation. The only context which is *presented* in the document is that at some point friends of the father and son had been driven out of Samosata (ŠMYŠT), had been unable to return and had been on their way to Seleucia (SLWQY'), where the writer had gone to meet them. The reference might be to Seleucia/Zeugma, but more probably to Seleucia in Babylonia. Later it turns out that it is the Romans who had acted so as to bar people (who now seem to include the writer) from their country; but it is still to be hoped that they will act justly.

Searching in incomplete narrative sources for suitable contexts for enigmatic items of evidence is a notoriously treacherous process. Nonetheless it is obvious that if there is an appropriate context, it is the early 70s, when Rome first gained control of Samosata, and the sons of Antiochus IV of Commagene fled to Vologaeses of Parthia, only to be brought back in honourable style by a Roman military mission.[30] But even so it has to be admitted that the letter contains no reference to a conquest by armed force. Otherwise any number of relevant episodes may have occurred without ever being recorded in surviving narratives. It does, however, seem improbable that the episode could have belonged after the mid-160s, when Osrhoene became a Roman dependent kingdom, or certainly after the 190s, when Mesopotamia was a heavily garrisoned province.[31]

If by any chance this text does reflect a real situation, specifically the absorption of Commagene in about 72, we still have no explicit indication of where the writer was, except that he refers to his having gone to meet the exiles between Samosata and Seleucia. This specific context might, however, also give extra significance to one of the writer's reflections: 'For what advantage did the Athenians gain by the murder of Socrates, the recompense of which they received in famine and pestilence? Or the people of Samos by the burning of Pythagoras, because in one hour their whole country was entirely covered with sand? Or the Jews by the death of their wise king, because from that same time their kingdom was taken away?'. Could this be the earliest

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[29] W. Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum* (1855), pp. 43–48 (text); 70–76 (English translation). The MS is B.M. Add. 14.658, see W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac MSS in the British Museum* III (1872), 1154ff. The only systematic re-examination is by F. Schulthess, "Der Brief des Mara bar Sarapion", *ZDMG* 51 (1897), 365, with discussion and German translation, to which the treatment in this discussion owes much. See now K. E. McVey, "A Fresh Look at the Letter of Mara bar Serapion to His Son", *V Symposium Syriacum* (*Or. Chr. Anal.* 236, 1990), 257, who regards it as a later Christian composition taking up the stance of a pagan observer.

[30] 3.1 above.

[31] 3.4 and 4.1 above.

Christian expression of the idea that the crushing of the Jewish revolt and the destruction of the Temple in 70 should be seen as divine punishment for the Crucifixion? It seems probably not; for the writer goes on to say that 'the wise king still lives in reality because of the laws which he promulgated'.

The reference might perhaps be to Solomon and to the subsequent fall of the northern kingdom. But if so, the apparent implication that the Jews were responsible for his death is puzzling. It remains possible that, rather than being an expression of early Syriac Christianity, the *Letter* is a prime example of how the historical perspective of educated people in the Near East was determined by Greek tradition, to which eventually Biblical history was added. The text does not name Christ, but, apart from the passage quoted, it refers elsewhere to Darius, Polycrates, Achilles, Agamemnon, Priam, Archimedes, Socrates, Pythagoras and Palamedes. In other words it shows the absorption of commonplace Greek learning and moralising, of a Stoic colouring, within a Syriac-speaking environment. Or rather, the environment concerned will surely have been bilingual. The concrete illustrations of this before the Roman period are almost non-existent. But, for what it is worth, there is one example of a bilingual tomb inscription, which may date to the early second century, from Mar Yakoub near Edessa.[32] This too comes from a tower-tomb, and records simply the name of the deceased, Amassamsēs the wife of Saredos son of Mannos, which appears in Syriac in two forms: 'MŠMŠ 'TTH or 'NTT DŠRDW BR M'NW. Both the tower, which seems to be of the later first century AD, and the script, which may be early second, show signs of relationship to what would be found at Palmyra at these dates. There is of course nothing surprising in the idea that western Mesopotamia was a bilingual, and bicultural, zone, like the territory of Palmyra, or that the language and script which were to be established as Syriac had not yet fully attained their classical forms.

The *Letter of Mara bar Serapion* does seem (possibly) to date to the 70s and, whatever its date, illustrates the fundamental importance of Greek thought in the evolution of Syriac literature. It is probably not, however, evidence for early Syriac Christianity. Is there such evidence? Or, to put it in other terms, did Christianity function as another element in the culture of this region which was imported from further west? The question is doubly important, for it involves the issue of whether there is any historical content in certain later Greek and Syriac traditions about pre-Roman Osrhoene.[33]

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[32] H. Pognon, *Inscriptions sémitiques de la Syrie, de la Mésopotamie et de la région de Mossoul* (1897), 104, nos. 57–58. For consideration of the date of the tower and the inscription see Pirenne, op. cit. (n.23), 109–115 (with a photograph of the tower on p. 110).

[33] For all the discussion which follows I am dependent on the paper by S. Brock, "Eusebius and Syriac Christianity", in H. W. Attridge and G. Hata (eds.), *Eusebius, Christianity and Judaism* (1992), 212.

It should be made clear, first, that what is at stake is the question of a Christianity transmitted and, in communal terms, organised via the use of a Semitic language: in other words, of an early Syriac church. Second, here as elsewhere, it is virtually impossible to prove a negative; it is hardly conceivable that we could *prove* that there was no Syriac church east of the Euphrates in the first century or the early second. Third, by the time we arrive at the major Syriac work, *The Book of the Laws of the Countries,* 'of' Bardesanes (that is, in which he appears as the main speaker in the dialogue), written in the early third century, the spread of Christianity, east of the Euphrates as elsewhere, can simply be assumed as the conclusive item of evidence for the variability of human customs: 'What shall we say of the new people of us Christians (KRSṬYN'), that the Messiah has caused to arise in every place . . . Those who live in Media do not flee away from their dead . . . those who live in Edessa ('WRHY) do not kill their wives or sisters who have committed adultery . . . and those who live in Hatra do not stone thieves'.[34] Whether we can trace the early evolution of an 'eastern' Christianity is too complex a question for now. But what is certain is that by the end of the third century it was claimed that the king Abgar who had been ruling in Osrhoene at the time of Christ had been a convert. For Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* was able to quote extensive documents, translated from 'the language of the Suroi', and preserved in the archives at Edessa: a letter of Abgar to Jesus, with Jesus' reply; and a longer narrative, also translated from Syriac, of how, after the Crucifixion, Judas Thomas sent the apostle Thaddaios to Abgar, and of how he healed Abgar and preached the gospel.[35]

Later, probably in the early fifth century, the story was much more fully embroidered and took the form of a wonderful Christian historical novel, the *Teaching of Addai* (that is, 'Thaddaios'), preserved in a Syriac manuscript of about AD 500.[36] As evidence for the invention of tradition, and (something of considerable importance) the continued relevance of the memory of the kings of Edessa long after the dynasty had ceased, both texts are of great significance. As to the latter aspect, there is also independent confirmation. When the western pilgrim 'Egeria' visited Edessa in the 380s, she was shown Abgar's palace, with the king's portrait and that of his son 'Magnus', and was given a copy of Abgar's letter and Jesus' reply.[37]

But neither text can tell us anything of first-century Edessa, and both leave entirely open the question of when Christianity was first preached there. The dynasty unquestionably remained pagan throughout the pre-Roman period, and almost certainly during it also. Similar problems attend the two entirely spurious Syriac martyr-acts, of Sharbil and of the bishop Barsamya, which will also, probably, have been written in the early fifth century. They owe their form to the (relatively) authentic martyr-acts of the Tetrarchic period, discussed below, but otherwise also belong to the category of the evocative historical novel. But nonetheless they too attest to a sense of history in Christian Edessa. The *Acts of Sharbil* begins:

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[34] Trans. H. J. W. Drijvers, *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaiṣan of Edessa* (1965), 59–61.

[35] Eusebius, *HE* I, 13.

[36] For a text and facing translation of this splendid and highly readable work, see G. Howard, *The Teaching of Addai* (1981).

[37] Egeria, *Itin.* 18–19; see J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels to the Holy Land*^{2} (1981), 113ff.

> In year 15 of Autokrator Traianos Kaisar, and in year 3 of the kingship of King Abgar the Seventh, and in year 416 of the kingship of Alexandros, king of the Greeks (MLK' DYWNY') and in the priesthood (KWMRWTH) of Sharbil and Barsamya, Traianos Kaisar gave orders to the governors (HGMWN'—from the Greek *hēgemōn*) of the countries of his dominions, that sacrifices and libations should be increased in all the cities of their administration . . .[38]

The context is quite unhistorical: Trajan gave no general order for sacrifice, and in any case neither in AD 104/105 (by the Seleucid year) nor in 112/113 (by his regnal year) was he in control of what the text calls 'Edessa of the Parthians' ('DS' DPRTWY'). But the vocabulary does reflect that of pagan Edessa, and it may be that the document could properly be used (as it has been) in reconstructing what the pagan city had been like, and what gods were worshipped there.

What is certain is that the historical consciousness of Christian Edessa, centuries after the dynasty had disappeared, continued to give that dynasty a central place. In this way the kings were to enjoy an after-life which makes an extraordinary contrast with the complete disappearance, as regards local traditions, of their counterparts in Commagene or Nabataea or Judaea (a few passing Talmudic references to the Hasmonaeans and Herodians hardly constitute an exception). That prominence was maintained when Christian Syriac writers came to compose historical works. Three out of a number of Syriac chronicles of the Byzantine and medieval periods deserve a brief mention here, precisely because they provide a picture of the dynasty of before the 160s.[39] The first is the *Chronicle of Edessa,* written in about AD 540, which begins, out of chronological order, with a vivid account of a flood in the Seleucid year 513 (AD 201/202), to which we will come, and then continues with the following set of entries. To avoid unnecessary division, the quotation will include all those down to the 340s AD. As remained the general rule in Syriac literature as well as documents, the text uses the Seleucid era beginning in October 312 BC:

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[38] W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (1864), 41ff.

[39] For a survey see (as always) S. Brock, "Syriac Historical Writing: A Survey of the Main Sources", *Journal of the Iraqi Academy (Syriac Corporation)* 5 (1979–80), 1, repr. in Brock, *Studies in Syriac Christianity* (1992).

> In the year 180 (133/132 BC) the kings began to reign in Orhai.
> In the year 266 (47/46 BC) Caesar Augustus reigned.
> In the year 309 (4/3 BC) our Lord was born.
> In the year 400 (AD 88/89) King Abgar built a funerary tower (NPŠ') in honour of his death.
> In the year 449 (AD 137/138) Marcion left the catholic church.
> [. . .] Caesar Lucius (LWQYS QSR), however, in collaboration with his brother subjected the Parthians to the Romans in the fifth year of his rule (AD 165/166?).
> On Tammuz 11 in the year 465 (July 11, 154) Bardesanes (BRDYṢN) was born.
> In the year 517 (AD 205/206) Abgar built the palaces (BYRT') in his city.
> In the year 551 (AD 239/240) Mani was born.
> In the year 614 (AD 302/303) the walls of Orhai collapsed for the second time in the days of King Diocletian (DYQLYṬYNWS MLK').
> In the year 624 (AD 312/313) Bishop Qona laid the foundation of the church of Orhai. His successor Ša'd built and completed it.
> In the year 635 (AD 323/324) the *koimētērion* of Orhai was built, in the days of the bishop Aitallaha, a year before the great synod in Nicaea.
> In the year 636 (AD 324/325) Aitallaha became bishop of Orhai. He built the *koimētērion* and the east side of the church.
> In the next year there gathered at Nicaea the synod of 318 bishops.
> In the year 639 (AD 327/328) building and additions took place in the church of Orhai.
> In the year 649 (AD 337/338) there died Mar Yaqob, bishop of Nisibis (NṢYBYN).
> In the year 657 (AD 344/345) Abraham became bishop in Orhai. He built the chapel of the confessors.
> In the year 660 (AD 347/348) Constantius the son of Constantine built the city of Amida ('MD MDYNT').
> In the year 661 (AD 348/349) Constantius also built the city of TL' (Tella?), which was previously called Antipolis ('NTYPWLYS, Antoninopolis?).[40]

As will be seen, the emphasis is heavily Christian (and the chronicler has confused the year of Mani's birth with that of his first preaching). Two of the kings appear in it, both in quite appropriate terms. One king Abgar builds a funerary tower (NPŠ') in the general period in which these began also in Palmyra; and the most famous of the kings, Abgar the contemporary of Severus, builds a palace (BYRT'). But although the beginning of the dynasty is recorded, nothing is said of its end. For that we have to turn to the major Syriac world-chronicle of about AD 775, probably written at Zuqnin near Amida, often unhelpfully described as being the work of 'Ps-Dionysius of Tell-Mahre', and never fully translated into any European language; to save, or at least limit, confusion, it will be referred to here as the *Chronicle of Zuqnin*.[41] Here the entries detailing what is evidently intended to be a complete list of the kings are scattered among other material. It will suffice to note that the author claims that the dynasty began in the 'year of Abraham' 1880 or the 161st Olympiad (136–133 BC), and ended in the 249th Olympiad (AD 217–220). As will be seen later, some sense can be made of the entries from the 160s onwards, by correlating them with contemporary evidence. As for the earlier entries, often full of circumstantial detail, all that need be noted is that the anonymous author both believed that he had a complete account of the kings to hand and felt that the individual reigns deserved a place in his universal chronicle.

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[40] Full references in App. C. The translation offered here owes much to the German translation of L. Hallier (1892).

Finally, the continuity of historical tradition in a Syriac context, and the lasting centrality within it of the dynasty of Edessa, is shown nowhere better than in the fact that the most coherent account of the kings is given in a single paragraph by the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (AD 1126–1199). He agrees with the *Chronicle of Edessa* in dating the beginning of the dynasty to the Seleucid year 180 (133/132 BC); but he also offers a historical explanation, namely its having derived from the decline of the Greek and the rise of the 'Aramaean' element there. On his view the kings ruled for 386 years, falling under Roman control in the Seleucid year 477 (AD 165/166), and ending in the fifth year of the Emperor Philip, year 560 (AD 248/249).[42] As we will see later, unless there was a second restoration of the dynasty in the mid-third century, this must be wrong, as the contemporary parchments show. It remains striking that Michael speaks of the area as BYT NHRYN, literally 'between the rivers', exactly the expression used in the newly published Syriac parchment of AD 240.[43] In any case, whatever minor errors or displacements may be found in their narratives, all three writers preserve clear reflections of the moment in the 160s when Edessa/Orhai passed under Roman domination.

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[41] For details see App. C. I am extremely grateful to Sebastian Brock for providing a translation of the relevant sections of this and other Syriac chronicles, including the extract from Michael the Syrian.

[42] Text and French translation in J.-B. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien* I–V (1901–1924). The relevant extract is V, 5.

[43] 12.5 below.

12.4. ROMAN DURA-EUROPOS

As already indicated, it was in the 160s, with the Parthian war of Lucius Verus, that contemporary evidence for Edessa becomes relatively fuller. But this was also the moment when Dura passed under Roman rule, and the evidence from there, though it includes no more than fragments of literary works, is considerably more detailed, and much more varied in character and in language, than that from Mesopotamia. Partly for that reason, partly because the life of Dura ended abruptly in the 250s and partly because the evidence now available shows that Syriac documents were known also at Dura, and elsewhere on the middle Euphrates, we will turn back to 'Roman' Dura first, before moving again to Osrhoene.

As we saw earlier, Dura continued to be garrisoned by Palmyrene archers, apparently not yet as part of the regular Roman auxiliary forces, until the 180s or 190s, from which time onwards both other Roman auxiliary units and legionary detachments *(vexillationes)* are attested; from 208 onwards the vast bulk of the extensive surviving military archives in Latin concern the (now regular) Twentieth Cohort of Palmyrenes. The presence of a substantial Roman force, with other detachments stationed up and down the river, is the first and most obvious of the new circumstances which made Dura 'Roman'. From 194 onwards Dura, and the outposts dependent on it, formed an outlying part of Severus' new province of 'Syria Coele'.[1]

The second very general impression (it can hardly be more than that) left by the evidence which we happen to have is of a much more marked intermingling of different elements, in language, personal nomenclature, art and religion, than is apparent from the relatively scanty remains of Parthian Dura.[2]

As regards language, while Greek remains standard, Latin of course now appears in large quantities, not only in military archives proper but, for instance, in an inscribed dedication to the 'Genius of Dura' and 'for the safety of Commodus Augustus', put up by two *decuriones* of the Cohors II Ulpia Paphlagonum Equitata.[3] Palmyrene also continued in public use, as in a Greek/Palmyrene bilingual inscription of AD 228/229 to the goddess Nemesis

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[1] 3.4 and 4.1 above.

[2] The best study remains C. B. Welles, "The Population of Roman Dura", in P. R. Coleman-Norton (ed.), *Studies in Roman Economic and Social History in Honor of A. C. Johnson* (1965), 279.

[3] *Dura Report* I, 42, no. 1.

(LNMSYS in Palmyrene).[4] More significant is the fact that Aramaic appears for the first time. The extremely important Aramaic inscriptions of the third-century synagogue will be mentioned below. But there is also an enigmatic fragment in Aramaic of what appears to be a letter, also of the early third century; this too may, however, be Jewish.[5] More significant, there is a Greek deed of sale of the same period in which the seller acknowledges receipt in Aramaic: 'Zebida, and [I have received?] the price, *denarii* 5[. . .?]'.[6] So far, it has been only in Judaea and Arabia that we have encountered contexts in which documents were drawn up in Greek, but in which personal attestations could be entered in Semitic languages.

More significant still, there is evidence that Syriac was in use. The famous Syriac deed of sale of 243 had in fact been drawn up in Edessa, and full consideration of it belongs in that context. But it is still noteworthy that it had been in the possession of someone in Dura when the city was destroyed in the next decade; similar considerations apply to the two newly discovered Syriac documents from further up the Euphrates. The deed of sale is not, however, the only trace of Syriac at Dura. Two such items are inscriptions on portable objects, a silver vase and a fragment of pottery.[7] But one is a public document, a votive *stele* from the 'Temple of Hadad and Atargatis'.[8] The text may date to the end of the second century. The dedicator seems to be called 'Vologaeses son of Seleukos' (WLGŠ BR SLQ) and to describe himself as 'pupil of Rama' (TLMD' DRM'); he ends '(may he be) remembered before god' (DKYR QDM 'LH'). Given the public context in a pagan temple, the temptation to see this as a Christian text has to be resisted.

Roman Dura did, however, exhibit an extraordinary variety of different cults, co-existing in close conjunction, including the only known Christian house-church of before AD 312. Apart from the unique evidence provided by the altar which a soldier of IV Scythica chose to dedicate to 'Zeus Betylos of those who dwell by the Orontes',[9] it is conspicuous that local deities from elsewhere in the Roman Near East were widely worshipped there, and that (as it seems) their importation was due to the army. For example, a tribune makes a dedication to the Palmyrene god, Iarhibol; a *legatus* (and others) to Atargatis; and the freedman of a centurion in charge of *vexillationes* to 'I(uppiter) O(ptimus) M(aximus) D(olichenus)' in AD 211.[10] Just before that, the temple of 'Deus Sol Invictus Mithras' had been restored, as a Latin inscription records, by *vexillationes* of the legions IV Scythica and XVI Flavia Firma. But the shrine of Mithras seems to have begun its existence, in a private house, in the 160s; and the earliest record of it is a bilingual inscription put up by a Palmyrene officer in AD 168/169.[11]

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[4] *Dura Report* I, 48 and 62; du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire,* no. 12.

[5] *P. Dura,* no. 151; see J. T. Milik, "Parchemin judéo-araméen de Doura-Europos, an 200 ap. J.-C.", *Syria* 45 (1968), 97 (speculative).

[6] *P. Dura,* no. 22, fr. *d.,* l. 3: [. . .]ZBYD' W[QB]L(?)T(?) [D]MWH DNR' HMŠ[. . .].

[7] *Dura Report* IV, 178–191; Drijvers, *Inscriptions,* pp. 50–51.

[8] *Dura Report* III, 68–71; Drijvers, *Inscriptions,* no. 63. I am very grateful to Sebastian Brock for comments on this text.

[9] Ch. 1 above.

Of all the reflections of a complex set of cults, and of a highly distinctive artistic repertoire, which the Roman army left at Dura, the most striking must be the famous painting from the 'Temple of Bel' showing Iulius Terentius, whom we encountered earlier as tribunus of the Cohors XX of Palmyrenes, and who may have died during a Persian raid in 239.[12] This much-reproduced fresco shows Terentius, with a large group of soldiers behind him, and accompanied by a standard-bearer, making a sacrifice on a small altar. He is named in Latin, as 'Iul. Terentius trib.', and one of the soldiers, in Greek, as 'Themēs son of Mokimos, priest'. Five deities are symbolically represented. Three statues of male gods, or possibly deified Emperors, in armour and placed on pedestals, are not identified; but the two statues of seated female deities placed in front of them are: they are the Tychē (Fortune) of Dura and that of Palmyra, both here labelled in Greek.[13] It is striking that this fresco, one of the prime examples of partial frontality in Duran art, is in intention the representation of a Roman military unit celebrating jointly, in Latin and Greek, the 'Fortunes' of the two cities, of which one, Palmyra, was certainly a Roman *colonia* and the other almost certainly was.

For, as we have seen, the Hellenistic past of Dura was heavily emphasised in the early years of the Roman occupation, and continued to be so in the last years, when the city unquestionably was a *colonia:* in the Greek divorce-deed of a Roman soldier drawn up in 254 the city appears as the '*Kolōneia* of the Eurōpaioi of Seleukos Nikatōr, the sacred, inviolate and autonomous'.[14]

It cannot be stressed too strongly that, for all its distinctive regional architecture and art-forms—partially paralleled in both Palmyra and Osrhoene—as a community Dura always remained a Greek, or in the end a Graeco-

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[10] *Dura Report* II, 90, no. 3 (Iarhibol); III, 43, no. 145 (Atargatis); IX, 107, no. 970 = M. Hörig and E. Schwertheim, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni* (1987), no. 32 (cf. no. 33, AD 250/251). For Zeus of Doliche see 7.2 above.

[11] *Dura Report* VII–VIII, 83ff.; du Mesnil du Buisson, *Inventaire,* no. 19.

[12] 4.1 above.

[13] For the scene, in what was previously labelled the 'Temple of the Palmyrene Gods', see F. Cumont, *Fouilles de Doura-Europos,* 89ff. A. Perkins, *Art of Dura-Europos,* 42ff. The fresco is now in the Yale University Art Gallery. A small monochrome reproduction in S. B. Matheson, *Dura-Europos: The Ancient City and the Yale Collection* (1982), 23.

[14] 12.2 (early years) and 4.3 (divorce deed).

Roman, city. The traces of the use there of Semitic languages (Palmyrene above all) and—in tiny scraps—of Iranian languages do not serve to refute this proposition. On our evidence, Palmyra, which was a recent growth and was not a Hellenistic foundation, was the only publicly bilingual city in the Roman Near East. But this aspect of the public life of Dura throws into sharper relief the remarkable evidence relating to the Jewish community there, as it was in the third century;[15] and it will also serve to raise questions about the Christian community.

The significance of the remains of the Jewish community lies first of all in the well-known series of frescoes depicting Biblical scenes from the synagogue. Even though the deity is himself of course not portrayed directly, the use of figurative art in this context naturally raises major questions about the religious conventions of this community. In the wider context of the Roman Near East, however, their greatest significance is quite different: not religious but historical. For, apart from scenes from Greek mythology (and frescoes from the church-house at Dura, mentioned below), these Biblical frescoes are the only visual representations from the entire region which explicitly portray events which occurred before the Hellenistic period: the Exodus and the Crossing of the Red Sea; Elijah on Mount Carmel; Samuel anointing David; or Solomon receiving the Queen of Sheba (he is identified in Greek as *Slēmōn,* strikingly reflecting a Syriac vocalisation of the name). The 'amnesia' which so strongly marked the outlook of those who lived in this region was not shared by this remote Jewish community.

What is more, the historical lessons to be imparted by the paintings were reinforced by labelling some of the key figures, either in Greek or in Aramaic, and sometimes by stating what it is that they were portrayed as doing: for example 'Moses, when he went out from Egypt and parted the waters' (MŠH KD NPQ MN [MN] MṢRYM WBZʿ L'MH).

It is equally significant, in the absence of public inscriptions in Aramaic put up in Dura by gentiles, that the completion of the final version of the synagogue—created by the internal conversion of a private house—was recorded in a formal inscription in Aramaic, painted on two ceiling-tiles. This was not a public inscription, in the sense of having been visible to passers-by. But it was an official document, in the main place of communal resort:

> This house was built in the year 556, this corresponding to the second year of Philippos [. . .] Kaisar, in the eldership (BQŠYŠWTH) of Samuel, priest (KHNH), son of Yedaʿya the *archon* ('RKWN) . . .

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[15] See A. R. Bellinger, F. E. Brown, A. Perkins and C. B. Welles (eds.), *Dura Final Report* VIII.1, *The Synagogue*^{2} (1979); for a brief summary see Schürer, *HJP* III.1 (1986), 10–12. Not all the details are mentioned here.

The year is thus AD 244/245, little more than a decade before the destruction of the city. One of the painted Greek inscriptions from inside the synagogue repeats the information relating to Samuel: 'Samouēl son of Eiddeos, *presbyteros* of the Jews, founded (it)'.

These and other texts, including a number of graffiti in either Greek or Aramaic, suggest that the community, both as a group and as individuals, was bilingual (or even trilingual, since there are a few brief Iranian texts). It seems, however, that Hebrew was retained for liturgical purposes: a Hebrew prayer for use after meals is preserved on scraps of parchment found near the synagogue.[16] That must give extra significance to the communal use of Aramaic and Greek by the Jews in other contexts. There is a close parallel to what we know of Jewish communities of the same general period in Palestine, for instance at Tiberias.[17] But no other fully bilingual Jewish community is known from anywhere else, outside Palestine, within the Roman Empire.

On a much more modest scale than the synagogue, another private house was converted for use as a Christian church.[18] Two features are of particular relevance. One is again the use of narrative art, this time to represent scenes both from the New Testament, for instance the healing of the paralytic, and Christ walking on the water, and from the Old, for instance David and Goliath. The second is the presence of brief painted or scratched inscriptions, nearly all in Greek. Here too, for instance, two Old Testament figures are labelled in Greek, 'Daouid' and 'Goliod' (reflecting the spelling found in Syriac bibles). Several inscriptions invoke the name of Christos, and one proclaims 'One God in Heaven'. One also supplies a date, the Seleucid year 544, AD 232/233.

Slight as the evidence is, it combines with the discovery of a fragment of Tatian's *Diatessaron* in Greek to suggest strongly that this was a Christian community which, like others, read the Old and New Testaments in Greek. If there was an Aramaic-using Christian community (as opposed to a community which might provide an oral translation into Aramaic of a liturgy in Greek, as in Palestine in the early fourth century),[19] there is no contemporary evidence for it at Dura, or anywhere else. The question remains open. But one graffito from the courtyard of the Christian building reveals another possibility: it is unmistakably a Syriac alphabet, written in Estrangela, and from right to left.[20] It is enough to suggest that, in a Christian context as in others, third-century Dura was a meeting-point of Greek and Syr̈iac.

[16] *P. Dura,* no. 10.

[17] 10.4 above.

[18] C. H. Kraeling, *Dura Final Report* VIII.2, *The Christian Building* (1967). The inscriptions are on pp. 87ff.

[19] Cf. 5.2. above, text to n. 29.

[20] Kraeling, op. cit., 91, no. 3.

12.5. EDESSA AS A KINGDOM AND ROMAN COLONY UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF THE THIRD CENTURY

The intermingling of Greek and Syriac was also characteristic, as we can now dimly begin to perceive, of the Euphrates zone as a whole. For instance, at a place called El Mas'udiye, on the east bank of the Euphrates opposite Hierapolis and somewhat to the south of Serrin (the site of the Syriac inscription of AD 73/74), there was discovered a mosaic with an inscription in Greek and Syriac, which seems to be dated to the Seleucid year 539, AD 228/229.[1] The mosaic represents a bearded male figure wearing a crown of roses, seated between two female figures thought to represent 'Syria' and 'Mesopotamia'. The identification of the male figure at any rate is not in doubt, for it is the 'king' river Euphrates: 'Basileus Potamos Euphratēs' in Greek, with PRT MLK' written vertically in Syriac below. It is by no means certain that the domains of the dynasty of Osrhoene had ever stretched so far south-west as this; but at this moment, at any rate, the kingdom was no longer in existence, and the whole area was provincial territory. The use of Syriac was a regional phenomenon, which was not a function of any particular political structure. As the evidence from Dura, attached to Syria Coele and situated on the west bank of the river, shows, people living along the middle Euphrates were in connection with Palmyra, across the steppe to the west; with northern Syria, where the governor of the province was normally to be found; and with Mesopotamia, which they will have reached either by going up the Chabur past the site of the later fortress of Circesium, or up the Balikh, which joined the Euphrates at Nicephorium. The same connections are vividly illustrated, as we will see later, in the new archive of documents in Greek and Syriac, dating between the 220s and the 250s, which come from the area around the confluence of the Chabur and the Euphrates. But first we need to look at what we know of the last decades of the dynasty of Osrhoene, from the Parthian war of Lucius Verus in the 160s to the deposition of King Abgar in 212/213 by Caracalla, and the conferment on Edessa of the status of a Roman *colonia*. For, in spite of the caution expressed above, it is above all to Edessa that the evidence for a culture expressed in Syriac relates. It was not, however, a 'native' culture, but a new phenomenon of the Imperial period; to adapt Daniel Schlumberger's phrase about the art of western and central Asia, it was 'a non-Mediterranean descendant of Greek culture'.[2]

Contemporary documents relating to Osrhoene now allow a hypothetical reconstruction of the succession of kings who ruled as allies and dependents of Rome; while the details need not be argued here (and hardly matter), it is now clear that the Syriac *Chronicle of Zuqnin* of the eighth century preserves real information, but has placed each king of this later period some twenty-six years too early.[3]

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[1] For recent treatments of the mosaic (now lost) see J. Balty, "La mosaique au Proche-Orient I", *ANRW* II.12.2 (1981), 347, on pp. 369–370, and Pl. XII.1; K. Parlasca, "Das Mosaik von Mas'udiye aus dem Jahre 228/229 n. Chr.", *Dam. Mitt.* 1 (1983), 263.

[2] D. Schlumberger, "Descendants non-Méditerranéens de l'art grec", *Syria* 37 (1960), 131.

Hypothetically, therefore, it will have been in 162/163–164/165 that Wael son of Sahru 'reigned over Orhai for two years', as the *Chronicle* records. He duly appears on coins as W'L MLK', with Vologaeses IV of Parthia portrayed on the obverse. After him King Ma'nu 'returned from Roman territory, and ruled for twelve more years' (after twenty-four previously). This second period will be 164/165–176/177, and it will be he who is named on coins as either M'NW MLK' or in Greek as 'Basileus Mannos Philorōmaios'; Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus and Commodus are also duly represented on his coins. Then came the best-known king of Osrhoene, Abgar son of Ma'nu, who, as the *Chronicle* records, ruled for thirty-five years, so perhaps 176/177–211/212. He appears on coins along with Commodus as 'BGR MLK' or 'Abgaros Basileus', and along with Septimius Severus, in Greek only, with various versions of a Roman name: 'Bas(ileus) L(oukios) Ail(ios) Sep(timios) Abgaros'. Then, according to the *Chronicle,* 'Abgar Severus' ruled for one year and seven months. This seems to fit with the report that Caracalla deposed a king Abgar for cruelty to his subjects, and also with the fact that 212/213 was to be counted as the first year of the 'liberation' of Edessa. His rule was therefore in 211/212 to 212/213.[4]

It was thus the long-lasting (Septimius) Abgar son of Ma'nu, sometimes called Abgar the Great, whose kingdom had its boundaries defined under Severus in 195, and who made a notoriously grand display when visiting Severus in Rome.[5] Seen from within, it was he who was ruling 'in the year 513 in the reign of Severus and the reign of King Abgar son of Ma'nu', thus AD 201/202, when the river Daisan overflowed its banks and a great flood ensued. The detailed account of this which forms the first, and much the longest, entry in the sixth-century *Chronicle of Edessa* has all the style of an eyewitness narrative, and claims to be the work of contemporary scribes. 'Our lord King Abgar' (MRN 'BGR MLK') took steps to counteract the effects of the flood, later re-built his palaces and granted a five-year remission of taxes. His nobles also built themselves new residences in the neighbourhood of the palace.

In a more literal sense of 'seen', it is surely this King Abgar whose portrait occupies the centre of a splendid new funerary mosaic from Edessa, first published in 1981. The four corners of the mosaic are occupied by portraits of the dedicator, BRSMY' BR 'ŠDW, and of other members of his family, each named. The central figure, the bust of a bearded man in a heavy cloak and flat cap, is duly identified as 'BGR BR M'NW; and a text of the dedication is set out below the portrait:

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[3] For further details see App. C.

[4] Cf. 4.2 above.

[5] 3.4 above; Dio LXXIX, 16, 2.

> I, BRSMY' BR 'SDW, made for myself this house of eternity (BYT 'LM'), and for my children and my brother, for the life of 'BGR, my lord and benefactor (MRY W'BD ṬBTY).[6]

In spite of some doubts (since the term 'king' is not used), this should be accepted as a contemporary portrait of Abgar; the dedicator will be a noble of the type mentioned in the narrative of the flood.

If this narrative is indeed essentially contemporary, as seems to be the case, there are two important consequences. One is that one of the buildings destroyed by the flood is described as the 'temple of the church of the Christians' (HYKL' D'DT' DKRSṬYN'). If this is not a later insertion (as is possible), the reference *should* be to a house-church of the type known at Dura; as we saw earlier, the sixth-century *Chronicle of Edessa* itself attributes the laying of the foundations of 'the' church at Edessa to 312/313, exactly when we would expect it.[7] Provisionally, then, this account is evidence of the existence of a Christian community at Edessa to parallel that at Dura.

Second, the narrative of the flood is itself a powerful and vivid piece of writing. As such, it belongs with a contemporary work, the most important product of early Syriac literature, the *Book of the Laws of Countries* (KTB' DNMWS' D'TRWT'). In fact the word translated as 'laws', transliterated from the Greek *nomos,* would be better translated as 'customs'. In structure also the work is a pure borrowing from the Greek dialogue ('A few days ago we went to visit our brother Shamashgeram, when Bardaisan [BRDYṢN] came and found us there . . .'), and it takes the form of a discussion in which Bardaisan demonstrates by reference to the variety of human customs in each area (and the maintenance of the same customs in different areas, as by the Jews) that human conduct is not and cannot be determined by the stars. It is thus that he arrives finally at the proof of this offered by 'the new people of us Christians', in a passage quoted earlier.[8]

We know that Bardaisan, or in Greek Bardēsanēs, belonged in the time of King Abgar, for the Christian scholar Iulius Africanus, a native of Palestine, encountered 'Bardēsanēs the Parthian' at the court of King Abgaros and his son Mannos.[9] By the early fourth century Bardesanes, 'a Syrian by birth, but who attained to the summit of Chaldaean (astrological) learning', is named as the author of the dialogue by Eusebius, who quotes a large stretch of it in Greek, without, however, saying explicitly that this is a translation. Yet in his *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius had stated that Bardesanes' many works had been written in 'the language of the *Suroi*', and then been translated into Greek by his followers.[10]

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[6] See H. J. W. Drijvers, "Ein neuentdecktes edessenisches Grabmosaik", *Antike Welt* 12.3 (1981), 17; more fully in "A Tomb for the Life of the King: A Recently-discovered Edessene Mosaic with a Portrait of King Abgar the Great", *Le Muséon* 95.1–2 (1982), 167. Some doubts in J. B. Segal, "A Note on a Mosaic from Edessa", *Syria* 60 (1983), 107.

[7] 5.3 above.

[8] 12.3 above. Ed. and trans. H. J. W. Drijvers, *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaiṣan of Edessa* (1965).

There is no doubt that Bardesanes, whether literally the author of the dialogue or not, was a known personality at Edessa. Much of the thought in the work can be paralleled elsewhere; but in terms of the examples of different customs which it quotes, it is a unique view of the world as seen from the eastern fringes of the Empire. We have already encountered his observation about Christians in Media, Edessa ('WRHY) and Hatra, who did not follow the prevailing customs there, which he had earlier listed, and which were therefore not determined by the stars. Though not all of his examples belong in the Near East, some which do are particularly pointed: 'Recently the Romans have conquered Arabia and done away with all the customs there used to be, particularly circumcision'.[11] As noted earlier, by 'Arabia' ('RB) Bardesanes might have meant anywhere from the Red Sea to Mesopotamia itself. A series of Syriac tomb-inscriptions from Osrhoene, of which two date to AD 164/165, shows local officials, presumably under the kings, with the title 'ruler of Arab' (ŠLYṬ' D'RB). As in the Hauran, these were probably military officials whose role was to control the nomads on the fringe of the settled zone.[12]

Bardesanes' most-quoted local reference, however, is one on which too much has been built: 'In Syria and Edessa (BSWRY WB'WRHY) there was a custom of self-emasculation in honour of TR'T' (Atargatis), but when King Abgar HYMN he ordered that every man who emasculated himself have his hand chopped off. And from that day to this no one emasculates himself in the territory of Edessa (B'TR' D'WRHY)'.[13] The word HYMN, which means 'believed', has often been taken as evidence that Abgar converted to Christianity; and this conversion has then been interpreted as the origin of the legend that the earlier Abgar, the contemporary of Jesus, had been the first royal convert. But in fact Bardesanes takes Christianity as a separate and unconnected source of changing customs; and above all Eusebius, in quoting this passage in Greek translation, sees no allusion to Christianity, but simply writes, 'at a single moment King Abgar ordered . . .'.[14] There is thus no good evidence that the kings of Edessa were ever Christian. If we need a context for the order which Abgar gave, it can be supplied by Dio's report that Caracalla's reason, or pretext, for deposing a king Abgar was that he had been mistreating his subjects in the effort to make them conform to Roman customs.[15]

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[9] Africanus, *Kestoi* I, 20; cf. 10.4 above.

[10] Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* VI, 9, 32 to 10, 48. For other sources see H. J. W. Drijvers, *Bardaisan of Edessa* (1966).

[11] Trans. Drijvers, op. cit., 57.

[12] Drijvers, *Inscriptions,* nos. 5, 7, 9, 10? (undated); 16, 23 (164/165). For the Hauran see 11.5 above.

[13] Based on Drijvers' trans., op. cit. (n.8), 59. See Brock, op. cit., 12.3, n.33, for the correct interpretation.

That Abgar, if we follow the eighth-century *Chronicle of Zuqnin,* will have been Abgar Severus, the son of Abgar 'the Great'; and on the reconstruction given above the date will have been 212/213. But the process of forced Romanisation might well have started under the father. The question of which King Abgar is referred to by Bardesanes need not be decided. What is certain is that 212/213 was to be counted later as year 1 'of the liberation' (DḤRWR') of Edessa, and presumably therefore of its new status as a *colonia.*[16] For, as we now know from contemporary Syriac documents, the Seleucid year 553 (AD 241/242) counted as year 30 of the liberation, and year 554 (AD 242/243) as year 31. Year 1 was therefore the Seleucid year 524 (212/213). We will come in a moment to the documents of the early 240s which embody these dates, and which give the full titles of the city, as a *colonia,* in that period. For the moment it need merely be noted that colonial status (as well as 'liberation') did go back at least to the reign of Elagabal (AD 218–222); for coins of Edessa as a *colonia* start then (or possibly under Caracalla), and continue to that of Gordian.

But then a striking and unique change follows: coins appear representing and naming the Emperor Gordian along with a king Abgar, 'Abgaros Basileus'. Moreover, a newly published Syriac document of the Seleucid year 552 (AD 240/241) shows that this year counted as year 2 of this king, whose full name, in Latin form, was 'Aelius Septimius Abgarus' ('LYWS SPṬMYWS 'BGR MLK'). His year 1 had therefore been 239/240.[17]

We will come back later to the question of what Edessa/'Orhai was like under its restored dynasty. But the other revelation of the new document is in some ways even more significant. For it shows that the father of the restored king Abgar had been a Ma'nu with the title PṢGRYB', 'crown prince'. The word is used in this sense in yet another wonderful Christian historical novel written in Syriac, the *Acts of Thomas;* but it also appears on a Syriac inscription from the citadel of Edessa naming 'Šalmath, the queen, daughter of Ma'nu the crown prince' (ŠLMT MLKT' BRT M'NW PṢGRYB');[18] the inscription is thus a reflection of the continued importance of the royal family in 'colonial' Edessa. For the new Syriac document shows also that Ma'nu the 'crown prince' had been the son of 'Abgar the king'. He was therefore (it seems) either the son or perhaps the brother of the Abgar (Severus) deposed in 212/213.

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[14] Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* VI, 44: μιᾷ ῥοπῇ ὁ βασιλεῦς Ἄβγαρος ἐκέλευσε . . .

[15] Dio LXXVII, 12, 1^a–1^2.

[16] For this and what follows see Millar, "Roman *Coloniae*", 46–50 (where the first year is given, incorrectly, as 213/214).

[17] See below, text to n.22.

These details would hardly matter if, first, they did not happen to confirm that the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* was, up to a point, right in saying that after 'Abgar Severus' there had been a twenty-six-year reign of 'Ma'nu son of Abgar'. Placing the reign too early, the author in fact associated its end, very reasonably, with fighting in Mesopotamia under Caracalla ('Antoninos') and Macrinus (AD 217/218). But in fact, as is now clear, the twenty-six years will have been 212/213–238/239.

What role was played in Edessa in this period by Ma'nu as 'king-in-waiting' we cannot tell—indeed we do not know whether he was allowed to live there at all: two sons of *a* 'former king Abgaros' are known to have lived in Rome, where one died.[19] But it is to this first 'colonial' period of Edessa that two of the most striking of the mosaics of Edessa are dated. Both show in an extraordinarily explicit way the representation of Greek culture in a Syriac-speaking environment. The first is the mosaic on the floor of a tomb, constructed in the Seleucid year 539 (AD 227/228), which represents Orpheus seated under a tree and playing his lyre to birds and animals around him. In case the identification might be in doubt, a label is attached in Syriac: 'RPWS. The second dates to the year 547 (AD 235/236), and shows a large bird standing on a tomb in a grove of trees. Again it is identified: PNKS (phoenix). A number of other mosaics, none, however, precisely dated, represent the richly robed members of what seem to be Edessene leading families.[20] Though the use of pagan motifs, for instance a funerary couch or a tripod, would not prove that the persons concerned were pagan, there is nothing at all to show the influence of Christianity. But even in what was officially a *colonia,* minting Greek coins, very distinctive local art, dress and language flourished. It seems certain that Edessa remained predominantly a pagan city throughout our period. But Christianity was already established there, as we have seen; and a Christian apology preserved only in the same Syriac manuscript as the Bardesanes dialogue, the *Oration of Meliton the Philosopher* (M'MR'

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[18] Drijvers, *Inscriptions,* no. 27.

[19] *IGR* I, no. 179 = Moretti, *IGUR,* no. 1142.

[20] Orpheus: Segal, *Edessa,* Pl. 44; Drijvers, *Inscriptions,* no. 50; Phoenix: Segal, Pl. 43; Drijvers, no. 49. See J. Leroy, "Mosaiques funéraires d'Èdesse", *Syria* 34 (1957), 306; J. Balty, *ANRW* II.12.2 (1981), 387–390.

DMYLYṬWN PYLSWP'), *may* have been written originally in Syriac, and *may* emanate from Edessa (or even from Hierapolis, to which it also refers); if so, the 'Antoninos Kaisar' to whom the heading says that it was addressed *may* have been either Marcus Aurelius or Caracalla (both 'M. Aurelius Antoninus') during his campaigns in 216 and 217. But if it really was so addressed, then it must of course have been in a Greek version. However, until this neglected work, published twice in 1855, has been analysed more carefully, it must be left aside.[21]

The recent publication of authentic documentary evidence means in any case that we can concentrate on that. The first revelation of the newly published Syriac document from the period of the restored monarchy, already referred to above, is that not only the political framework but the nature and even the name of the city have changed. It also gives a glimpse of other places in the area:

> In the month Kanun of the former year 552, in the year 3 of Autokrator Kaisar Markos Antoninos Gordianos, Fortunate and Victorious, in year 2 of 'LWS SPṬMYWS 'BGR MLK' BR M'NW PṢGRYB' BR 'BGR MLK' who is honoured with the HPṬY' (*hypateia*—a 'consular' rank) in 'RHY (sic), the fortress city, mother of all the cities of Mesopotamia (DBYT NHRYN—literally 'of between the rivers'), this document was written in HYKL' KRK' ḤDT' DṢYD' of Abgar the king . . .[22]

One of the parties is called Bageshu son of Abgar son of Shamishu, from the village (QRYT') of Mihru; his attestation is written for him because he can neither read nor write. The other is Worod son of Nisharyahab, resident at Karka, but a native of a place called BYT PWRYN. It is this fact which explains why this contract was found in the new archive of mainly Greek documents which largely relate to places on the Euphrates. For, as we have seen briefly earlier, 'Beth Phouraia' (spelled in its Greek form in a variety of ways) was a village on the Euphrates above Dura, not far from its confluence with the Chabur.[23] A hint of how these places were linked in practice is provided by the fact that KRK’ ḤDT’ DṢYD’, ‘the new Karka of Ṣayda’, must be the place which Isidorus refers to as lying on the route between the Euphrates at Zeugma and the headwaters of the Balikh: ‘Charaka Sidou, (called) by the Greeks Anthemousia’. The place was ‘new’, presumably, because Syriac speakers could now revert to using its Semitic name. If it was really within the domains of the restored monarchy, these must have been extended west since Severus’ reign.[24]

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[21] Text (in Serta) in Cureton, *Spicilegium Syriacum* (1855), 22ff. (at end); translation, 41ff. Text and Latin translation also in J. B. Pitra, *Spicilegium Solesmense* II (1855), xxxiiiff. J.-M. Vermander, "La parution de l'ouvrage de Celse et la datation de quelques apologies", *Revue des études Augustiniennes* 18 (1972), 27, on pp. 33–36, argues that the addressee ('NṬWNYWS QSR) is Marcus Aurelius, and the date 169. It is very briefly discussed in H. J. W. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (1980), 35–36. See 7.2 and 8.4 above for what it reports of cults in Hierapolis and in Byblos.

[22] A preliminary publication of the heading in J. Teixidor, "Les derniers rois d'Édesse d'après deux nouveaux documents syriaques", *ZPE* 76 (1989), 219; full text in J. Teixidor, "Deux documents syriaques du IIIe siècle provenant du moyen Euphrate", *CRAI* (1990), 144, document A. Photograph on p. 145.

[23] 4.1 above. The Greek documents, of which only no. 1 has been fully published (with admirable speed) so far, will be referred to below as in the list in D. Feissel and J. Gascou,

These Syriac speakers were also Syriac writers. For although the whole document was written by a scribe, five witnesses added their names on the back in Syriac. The use of the language, however, was to survive the abrupt ending of the kingdom and the restoration of colonial status to what was now called, even in Syriac, Edessa: this must have occurred between December of AD 240 and the date of the next Syriac document, also from the new archive, September 242.[25] It is dated by year 5 of Gordian, by the consuls of 242 and (as mentioned above) by year 30 of the liberation of ‘the illustrious Antonina Edessa colonia metropolis Aurelia Alexandria’ (’NTWNYN’ ’DYS’ NṢYḤT’ QLWNY’ MṬRPWLS ’WRLY’ ’LKSNDRY’). This document too, however, was not written at Edessa, but at a place called Marcopolis Thera (?)—MRQPWLS TR’—which turns out to have its own local officials: ‘in the priesthood (KMRWT’) of Markos Aurelios ’NṬ’HYWRWS son of Aggai, and in the archonship (’RKWNWT’) of Markos Aurelios Alexandros son of SWBS and of BR‘T’ BR ŠLMSYN’. Once again Worod from Beth Phouraia on the Euphrates is involved, leasing some land to a native of Marcopolis. ‘Marcopolis’, it seems, was in fact yet another name for Charaka Sidou/Anthemousia, and may have come into use before the brief royal restoration. But now at any rate a Greek/Syriac *polis* with a Latin/Greek name is functioning there; in this region city-formation continued to the end of the period.

The same context—the restored colonial status of Edessa under Roman rule—is also revealed in the famous Syriac bill of sale of 243, found at Dura but written, in this case, in Edessa itself.[26] One copy was to be entered in the archives (B’RKYWN—*archeion*) of the city. Various features of this document are worth emphasis. First, there is in this case no internal evidence to suggest why it will subsequently have been taken, in the course of the next

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“Documents d’archives romains inédits du Moyen-Euphrate (III^{e} siècle après J.-C.)”, *CRAI* (1989), 535.

[24] Cf. 3.4 above.

[25] The first nine lines of this difficult text are published by Teixidor as document B in *CRAI* (1990), 154ff. In l.4 Teixidor reads B‘MRWT’, ‘in the residency’, surely wrongly, as Sebastian Brock kindly confirms. For this was originally read in *P. Dura*, no. 28, l.4, but corrected to BKMRWT‘, ‘in the priesthood’, by J. Goldstein in *JNES* 25 (1966), 1. Teixidor unfortunately pursues the idea of a Roman ‘resident’ official being posted to the town.

[26] *P. Dura*, no. 28; J. Goldstein, *JNES* 25 (1966), 1; Drijvers, *Inscriptions*, pp. 54–57. Cf. 4.2 above.

decade, to Dura. Second, the character of Edessa as a *colonia* is shown not only in its title but in the use of the transliterated Greek term *stratēgia* (B'SṬRṬGWT')—the normal equivalent for *duumviratus*—for its two annual magistrates, thus exactly as at Palmyra in the same period. As at Palmyra, one of these is a Roman *eques,* a rank signified by transliterating the Greek words *hippeus,* 'horseman' (HPWS), and *rōmaios* (RHMWS). Third, one of the witnesses signs in Greek, and another, on the back, in both languages. He in fact is one of the two *stratēgoi,* Marcus Aurelius Abgar, and signs as 'WRLS 'BGR SṬRṬG ŠHD (witness) in Syriac, and as 'Abgaros' in Greek. Formal proof of basic literacy in both scripts is rare. The other witnesses sign their names in Syriac. But the seller in the contract (for the purchase of a female slave) does not, because she is illiterate. Her husband therefore writes her attestation for her. Like everyone concerned, he is a Roman citizen with the *nomen* 'Aurelius': 'I, 'WRLS ḤPSY BR ŠMŠYHB, Edessene ('DYSY') of the twelfth tribe (PYLYS—from the Greek *phylēs*), declare that I have written on behalf of 'WRLY' MTR'T', my wife, in the subscription because she has not the capacity to write'.

Like the other Syriac documents, however, this one also takes us outside Edessa itself. For the purchaser comes from Carrhae/Harran—now, as we saw earlier, another Roman *colonia*—and duly has a full Roman name: LWQS 'WRLS TYRW BR BRB'ŠMN ḤRNY'—'Lucius Aurelius Tiro . . . Harranian'. Slight as it is, this glimpse of someone from this ancient city represents almost our only evidence for it in the Imperial period, between the first century BC, when its people are reported to have regarded themselves still as Macedonian settlers, and the late Empire, when the famous temple of the Moon-goddess (which Caracalla had been on his way to visit when murdered in 217) was still open, and the population was still firmly pagan.[27] But here as elsewhere in Roman Mesopotamia of the third century, brief snapshots are also available (or soon will be) from the new archive from the middle Euphrates. The fact that this is so is itself an indication of the links between the two areas.[28]

So, for instance, one of the new documents is a Greek contract of sale drawn up at Carrhae ('Aurelia Carrhae colonia, metropolis of Mesopotamia') in AD 250. The seller, Aurēlios Barbesumēs from Carrhae, belonging to the tribe 'Antōnianē', makes his attestation in Syriac, as do the witnesses. The purchaser of the mare in question comes from Beth Phouraia on the Euphrates.

[27] See W. Cramer, "Harran", *RAC* XIII (1986), 634; for the site, with its circuit of walls, see S. Lloyd and W. Brice, "Harran", *Anat. Stud.* 1 (1951), 77.

[28] As noted above, I depend on the list given by Feissel and Gascou, *CRAI* (1989), 557ff. In the order as mentioned below: no. 10 (Carrhae); nos. 8–9 (Nisibis); 6–7 (Marcopolis); 12 (Beth Phouraia); 3–4 (petition of *bouleutēs* of Neapolis).

The economic contacts made in daily life there prove to have stretched even as far as Nisibis. A contract for the sale of a slave at Beth Phouraia in 251 refers back to a previous contract, drawn up in the *colonia* of Nisibis in 250, for the sale of the same slave to a man named Absalmas son of Abdrodakos; he comes from the village of Bēathagaē in the territory of 'Theganaba', in an area called Abourēnē. This must mean the area round the Chabur River, probably its upper reaches. A similar slave-sale of the next year shows a native of another village in Abourēnē, resident at Beth Phouraia, re-selling a slave whom he had bought at Nisibis from the wife of a centurion. Here, for the first time, we come across a subscription in Syriac written at Beth Phouraia, west of the Euphrates.

Similarly, from the western part of Mesopotamia there are two copies of another contract for the sale of a slave drawn up in 249 at the place now called Marcopolis. Again, while the document is in Greek, the subscriptions are in Syriac, including a declaration by Aurelius Kozas on behalf of his sister Matthabeinē, who is illiterate. Finally, it is striking that some Greek documents drawn up at Beth Phouraia, and with no apparent involvement of people from Mesopotamia, also contain subscriptions in Syriac. One of these is a document of a different sort, a petition addressed to a Roman *praefectus*. The writer is Aurelius Abdsautas son of Abidierdos, a *bouleutēs* of Neapolis (as it seems, literally a 'new city' created out of the town of Appadana on the Euphrates north of Dura), but resident in Beth Phouraia. Even he, whose new rank might seem a prime example of the still active influence of Graeco-Roman models of urban life, and who is addressing a Roman official, nonetheless makes his subscription in Syriac. Even this one archive of the mid-third century must mean that the earlier history of the diffusion and use of Syriac has to be entirely re-considered.

In political terms, as we saw earlier, the new archive, with its dated documents, provides conclusive evidence that in the middle of the third century all of Mesopotamia, from Marcopolis eastwards to Carrhae and Nisibis, was in Roman hands. Like Palmyra, the whole region from the Euphrates to the Tigris was now 'Roman', 'Greek' and 'Syrian' at the same time.

12.6. SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CURRENTS IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

After the middle of the third century our evidence for the whole area shaped by the Euphrates, by the two rivers running into it from the Mesopotamian shelf, the Balikh and the Chabur, and by the Tigris, of which a long stretch became 'Roman' under the treaty of 298/299, is virtually non-existent for some decades.

Even taking a longer view, we know very little indeed either of the eastern part of what became Roman Mesopotamia, of the earlier social history of the Tur Abdin (Mons Masius) or of the plain to the north of it around Amida, which was to be fortified by Constantius in the 330s.[1] This latter area was to be the heartland of Syriac monasticism, whose last remnants still persist there.[2] Even of Nisibis, which was clearly the central place in the eastern part of the Mesopotamian shelf, we have only scraps of external information from the Parthian and earlier Roman periods.[3]

The effect of our ignorance is above all that we can supply no significant context or background against which to set the writings of the greatest figure in early Syriac Christianity, Ephrem, born at Nisibis in the early years of the fourth century.[4] We can take it as certain, however, that both as a Graeco-Roman city, a *colonia,* with a city-council as normal, and as a Christian community, Nisibis continued to be a bilingual, not to say trilingual, place. The earliest surviving Christian monument of the region is a baptistry at Nisibis dated by the Greek building-inscription of the bishop Vologaeses and the presbyter Akepsumas to AD 359.[5]

The social structure, the languages and the art and architecture of the whole region, of which part, the middle Euphrates, had been under Roman rule from the 160s and the rest from the 190s, all remain mysterious, to be glimpsed only in scattered items of internal and external evidence. The villages which certainly lined the rivers and covered the fertile area of the north-Mesopotamian shelf are as yet in most cases not even names. But the new archive is sufficient to show, what we could not have presumed, that daily life there involved the use of legal documents written in both Greek and Syriac—and the latter on the western bank of the Euphrates, as well as in Mesopotamia. Even the cities remain hardly more than names, at least until we encounter Ammianus' eye-witness narrative of events in the mid-fourth century. But again the new archive shows how real were the changes of identity brought

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1. For the final stages of the Roman advance into this area, 5.3 above.

2. For an extremely interesting account, unfortunately accompanied by a quite remarkably unintelligible map (pp. xxi–xxii), see A. Palmer, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Tur 'Abdin* (1990).

3. See, e.g., N. Pigulevskaya, *Les villes de l'état iranien aux époques parthe et sassanide* (1963), ch. 4, "Nisibe, ville frontière".

4. On Ephrem, whom I merely mention, not being in a position to say more, see, e.g., R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (1975), 29ff.; K. E. McVey and J. Meyerdorff, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (1989), introd. and trans. Cf. also S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem* (1985).

5. For the 'ordo et populus' there, Ammianus XXV, 9, 2. For the baptistery of Mar Yakoup see, e.g., M. M. Mango, "The Continuity of the Classical Tradition in the Art and Architecture of Northern Mesopotamia", in N. Garsoian, T. F. Matthews and R. W. Thomson (eds.), *East of Byzantium: Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period* (1982), 115; C. S. Lightfoot, "Facts and Fiction—the Third Siege of Nisibis", *Historia* 32 (1988), 105, on pp. 109–110.

about by the conferment of the title *colonia,* as well as illustrating both the police-functions of the army and the economic exchanges between soldier and civilian.[6]

Yet a further—and still more mysterious—element in an already complex social and cultural pattern will have been created by trade passing through this part of the Fertile Crescent. Our earlier sources, Strabo and Isidorus, speak of trade going across the Euphrates and then down the Balikh and downstream along the Euphrates to Babylonia. Another of the documents in the new archive shows Worod of Beth Phouraia advising his son Nisraios about hiring pack-camels for the transport of goods from Beroea (Aleppo) to Zeugma.[7] They might perhaps have then gone on to the middle Euphrates, where Beth Phouraia lay. But it *may* be that later the main direction of long-distance trade changed: not down the Euphrates but across the Fertile Crescent and then down the Tigris. Ammianus records that when Julian reached Carrhae, two roads to Persia lay open—eastward by Adiabene and the Tigris, or south via the Euphrates.[8] But it is possible that a trade-route now led not down the Tigris to Babylonia and the Gulf but directly eastwards to central Asia. Any such conclusion would, however, be too much to build on a scatter of literary references, though these are certainly suggestive. There is, first, the role of Nisibis as a centre for commercial exchanges, as laid down in the treaty of 298/299. Then there is the description in the *Expositio totius mundi,* written in the mid-fourth century, of the wealth which Nisibis and Edessa (or Amida?) gained from trade with Persia, and from the re-sale of goods to the rest of the Roman world.[9] But above all there is Ammianus' account of Batnae, a town situated near the headwaters of the Balikh, in the area which Isidorus had called Batanē:

> The town of Batne, founded in Anthemusia in early times by a band of Macedonians, is separated by a short space from the river Euphrates; it is filled with wealthy traders when, at the yearly festival, near the beginning of the month of September, a great crowd of every condition gathers for the fair, to traffic in the wares sent from India and China, and in other articles that are regularly brought there in great abundance by land and sea.[10]

Whether there was really a profound change in the direction of trade remains uncertain, for this district had always, as we have seen, been on the favoured road which led via the Balikh down the Euphrates. Ammianus' typically vivid narrative at this point is perhaps more significant in revealing how all these places lay close to barren steppe, and were exposed to the raids of the *Saraceni* who lived there. For in this year (AD 354) a daring Persian raid along the southern edge of Roman Mesopotamia had been directed through the steppe ('per solitudines') and had crossed the narrow fertile strip on either side of the Chabur ('Aboraeque amnis herbidas ripas'); the Persian forces were then joined by the *Saraceni,* of whom Ammianus gives a highly coloured, if conventional, account. In his view all the unsettled peoples, practising no agriculture, and using horses and camels, from the Nile to 'Assyria' had the same customs.[11] He later returns to their dangerous and unstable diplomatic and military relations with the Empire several times, in the course of narrating Julian's march into Persia—first when the *reguli* of the *Saracenae gentes* came to greet the Emperor at Callinicum, where the Balikh flows into the Euphrates.[12] Not much had changed since Strabo's time except that Roman forces were now present on this 'desert frontier'; and now, for the first time, we see these *gentes* playing that military role in relation to Rome which was to be so important in later centuries.

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[6] 4.1 and 12.5 above.

[7] *CRAI* (1989), 560, no. 16.

[8] Ammianus XXIII, 3, 1. For Ammianus' account of the Mesopotamian region, see above all J. Matthews, *The Roman World of Ammianus* (1989), esp. chs. 4 and 8.

[9] Treaty: 5.1 above; *Expositio totius mundi et gentium* 22, ed. J. Rougé (*SC* no. 124, 1966).

[10] Ammianus XIV, 3, 3, Loeb trans.

There is no contradiction between describing the line of Roman forts and roads along the edge of the steppe as a 'frontier' and admitting that *Saraceni* were to be found inside that line as well as outside it. Those who came to greet Julian at Callinicum may have come either from the east or from the west of the Euphrates, that is, from the large space between Palmyra and its territory to the south, and Chalcis, Beroea and Hierapolis to the north. Ordinary travellers in this area never ceased to be in danger of their attacks. This fact provides the context for the brilliantly evocative *Life* of the hermit Malchus by Jerome, written in the early 390s and set in the first half of the fourth century. Its hero, whose story is narrated by himself in the first person, as allegedly told to Jerome many years before, came from a family of farmers at Nisibis. Determining to be a monk, but unable to go east 'because of the Persians and the Roman frontier' (the story is set before 363), he instead went west to the desert of Chalcis. But then, wanting to see his parents, he began to travel east again:

> Lying near the public highway from Beroea to Edessa, there is a desert through which nomad Saracens are always wandering back and forth. For this reason, travellers along the way group together and, by mutual aid,

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[11] Ammianus XIV, 4. See esp. B. Shaw, "Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk: The Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad", *Ancient Society* 13–14 (1982–83), 5.

[12] Ammianus XXIII, 3, 8; cf., e.g., XXIV, 1, 10; 2, 4: 'Malechus Podosacis nomine, phylarchus Saracenorum Assanitarum', perhaps the earliest reference to the Ghassanids; see Matthews, op. cit. (n.8), 352.

> decrease the danger of surprise attack. There were in my company men, women, old men, young people, children, numbering in all about seventy. Suddenly, Ishmaelites, riding upon horses and camels, descended upon us in a startling attack, with their long hair flying from under their headbands. They wore cloaks over their half-naked bodies, and broad boots. Quivers hung from their shoulders; their unstrung bows dangled at their sides; they carried long spears, for they had not come for battle but for plunder.[13]

The rest of the tale, his captivity and eventual escape, need not concern us. What matters is the vivid portrait of the *Saraceni.* Jerome does not trouble to indicate precise dates and places, and it is not even clear whether this dramatic episode is supposed to have occurred west or east of the Euphrates. It does not matter, for the whole route was similarly exposed. For all its stereotypical and over-dramatised elements, the story is a genuine reflection of social contrasts and conflicts along the edge of the steppe.

Nonetheless, although this factor remained constant, very profound changes had occurred in the four centuries since Crassus had met his famous disaster outside Carrhae in 53 BC. There was the definite extension of Roman rule, even if in the mid-third century it withdrew again from Dura and the middle Euphrates below the Chabur, and in the mid-fourth from Nisibis and eastern Mesopotamia; the presence of Roman governors and soldiers, acting under the orders of distant Emperors; the re-enactment of the earlier Hellenistic process of city-formation, not only creating new Greek cities, like Marcopolis, Neapolis or Antininopolis (later Constantia), but making Roman *coloniae* of Dura, Carrhae, Rheshaina, Singara, Nisibis and Edessa; the spread of Christianity; and the emergence of Syriac as a literary language.

Why this emergence should have coincided quite closely with the spread of Roman rule, it is impossible to say; no such development took place in the case of either Nabataean or Palmyrene. But Syriac was in any case not confined to the area ruled by Rome. The twenty-three surviving homilies of Aphrahat, dating to AD 336/337 and 343/344, were written outside the Empire, under Sasanid rule.[14] The emergence both of a Syriac-speaking church and of Syriac as a language in which Christian theology could be expressed was therefore a phenomenon which was not dependent on the existence of the Empire; nor on the other hand did the influence of this Graeco-Roman empire serve to suppress it. The contrast with Nabataean and Palmyrene remains to be explained.

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[13] Jerome, *V. Malchi* (*PL* XXIII, cols. 55–62), 4. Trans. M. L. Ewald in R. J. Deferrari (ed.), *Early Christian Biographies* (1952), 281ff. See J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome* (1975), 71–72.

[14] I. Parisot, *Aphraatis Sapientis Persae Demonstrationes, Patrologia Syriaca* I.1–2 (1904–1907); see A. Vööbus, "Aphrahat", *Jahrb. f. Ant. u. Chr.* 3 (1960), 152; I. Ortiz de Urbina,

The fact that Syriac was a living language in which not only theological disquisitions but real-life narratives could be written does, however, mean that we can see the Roman Empire of the early fourth century, and the city of Edessa, not only through Greek and Latin sources, but through the medium of two brilliant Christian historical narratives composed in Syriac, the martyr-acts of Shmona and Guria and of Habib the deacon, set in the Great Persecution.[15]

These texts, each known only from a single late manuscript, are certainly not documentary records of events; hence they were not used earlier in the description of the effects of the Great Persecution in the Near East.[16] But they are, on the other hand, not pure historical fictions like the Syriac martyr-acts of Sharbil and Barsamya, set under Trajan.[17] The three martyrs are named as such by Ephrem, and are also listed in a calendar of martyrs at Edessa which is contained in the earliest Syriac literary manuscript, of AD 411.[18] There can be no certainty that the surviving manuscripts of these martyr-acts themselves accurately represent what was originally written. But it does seem that what we have goes back to narratives, with strongly marked novelistic and didactic elements, which were written in Edessa in the fourth century, and do genuinely reflect the historical circumstances of the Great Persecution, the life of the city, the country-districts (QWRY') around it, or an individual village (QRYT'), and even the institutions of Edessa as a *colonia*.

Thus the *Martyrdom of Shmona and Guria* begins: 'In the year 618 of the kingdom of Alexander, the Macedonian king (MLK' M'QDWNY') . . . in the magistracy ('SṬRṬYGWT', as in the Syriac contracts) of Aba and of Abgar son of Z'ora, in the days of Qona bishop of Edessa ('PSQWP' D'WRHY), the wicked Diocletian had made a persecution'. The Seleucid year 618 was AD 306/307, when Diocletian had already abdicated. But the sequence of persecutions had been initiated by him in 303, and general orders for sacrifice were being enforced in the Near East in these years.[19] The writer's perception of exactly which Emperor had been in power when is vague, just as it is in the account (presented as being by the same hand) of the martyrdom of Habib. Here the year given is 620, 308/309, but the persecuting Emperor is named (wrongly) as Licinius (LYQNS MLK'), while rumours are spreading that Con-

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Patrologia Syriaca^2 (1965), 46–51; T. D. Barnes, "Constantine and the Christians of Persia", *JRS* 75 (1985), 126.

[15] See for texts and translations F. C. Burkitt, *Euphemia and the Goth, with the Acts of Martyrdom of the Confessors of Edessa* (1913).

[16] 5.2 above.

[17] 12.3 above.

[18] See Brock, op. cit. in 12.3, n.33.

[19] 5.2 above.

stantine, in the west, is not persecuting, and is about to march against him. The wider circumstances are hopelessly confused, reflecting (if anything) the relations of Constantine, Maxentius and Licinius in 312/313. But here too the office of the two chief magistrates of the city is correctly called 'STRGṬYGWT' (the *stratēgia* or *duumviratus* of a *colonia*); and the governor (HGMWN'—*hēgemōn,* the normal Greek for *praeses*) is portrayed exercising power in the city attended by his staff (ṬKS'—*taxis*) or *officiales* ('WPYQYN). It is indeed precisely the fact that the narrative is shot through with Greek and Latin loan-words that shows that this is the language of everyday life in a city under Roman rule: the governor's court of justice (BYT DYN') may also be called a DYQSṬRYN *(dikastērion);* there he sits on his B'M (*bēma*—tribunal) in the BSLYQ' near the baths (BL'NY—*balaneia*). We thus see, in narrative form, something of the integration of two—and up to a point three—languages which is also visible in the public inscriptions of Palmyra.

The *purpose* of the narrative, however, is to display not accommodation and integration but the unyielding opposition of Christian principles and Christian tradition to the demands of the pagan state. Perhaps surprisingly, neither martyr-act has anything much to say of the pagan cults of the city. For an evocation of those we have to turn, unfortunately, to the fictional martyr-acts of Sharbil and Barsamya, set under Trajan:

> The whole city was assembled together near the great altar which is in the middle of the city opposite the office of records, all the gods having been brought together, and then been decorated, and set up in honour, both Nebu and Bel together with their companions. And all the high-priests were offering sweet incense and libations, and the odour of the sacrifices was diffusing itself, and sheep and oxen were being slaughtered, and the voice of the harp and the tabor was heard in the whole of the city.[20]

But whether a valid reconstruction of the paganism of Edessa can be based on this and other later Syriac sources is a question which must be left aside here.[21] It is more important to stress that in the relatively authentic martyr-acts of the Great Persecution a ringing appeal is made to the historical inheritance of the Bible. Shmona, suspended head down by his torturers, invokes the God of Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Jephthah, David, Daniel, Simon, Paul and Stephen. Yet it is precisely this which serves to recall the paradox presented by the historical culture of the Near East in this period. The martyr makes an appeal, in Syriac, to the central figures in a national tradition first set out in another Semitic language, Hebrew. But what he says could have been said, and was, just as well by contemporaries speaking in Greek, or in Latin. What, if anything, the historical perspective of Syriac-speaking Christians the Roman Empire was to owe to traditions from outside Greek culture is still mysterious. But it would not at any rate be any sense of the history of the period before Alexander other than that derived from the Bible.

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[20] For the Acts of Sharbil and Barsamya see 12.3 above. Trans. W. Cureton, *Ancient Syriac Documents* (1864), 41.

[21] See the extremely interesting book of H. J. W. Drijvers, *Cults and Beliefs at Edessa* (1980), which nonetheless seems to depend to a hazardous degree on later Syriac Christian works.

Nor was the communal reaction of Christians in Edessa to the restitution ordered by Constantine and Licinius visibly different from that anywhere else: as the sixth-century *Chronicle of Edessa* records, from AD 312/313 onwards they built a church, a cemetery and a chapel to the memory of the confessors.[22] But by now the story of Abraham as told in Genesis could be exploited to give Carrhae a place in religious history to which Edessa could lay no claim. When the western pilgrim Egeria visited Carrhae in the 380s, she was shown a church outside the city which stood on the site of Abraham's house, and the well from which Rebecca had drawn water. The well where Jacob had watered the animals fed by Rachel lay further outside the city, but could be visited, whereas Ur of the Chaldees lay ten days' journey away, beyond Nisibis and the Persian frontier.[23] Most of the population of Carrhae itself was still pagan; for the Christians, however, the place had now acquired a special role in the earliest history of their faith. In a very similar way, as we have seen, some of the *Saraceni* whom Christians had long been accustomed to label 'Ishmaelites' would themselves begin to acknowledge their descent from Hagar and Abraham.[24]

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[22] 12.3 above.

[23] *Itinerarium Egeriae* 20–21; cf. P. Maraval (ed.), *Égérie, journal de voyage* (*SC* 296, 1982), 21ff.; J. Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*^{2} (1981), 117ff.

[24] Ch. 1 above and 13.1 below.

APPENDIX
A

THE INSCRIPTIONS OF THE TETRARCHIC LAND-SURVEYORS

The inscriptions of the Tetrarchic land-surveyors have never been collected in full, and represent important evidence both for the working of the Tetrarchic state at the most local level and for local toponomy, communal nomenclature and forms of land-ownership. They divide into three main groups: (1) from the limestone massif of northern Syria; (2) from the Huleh Valley (the upper part of the Jordan valley) and the Golan Heights (Gaulanitis); and (3) the plain to the east of Gaulanitis, ancient Batanaea. There is also one important one (no. 35), and possibly a second (no. 36), from the Hauran (Auranitis).

In broad terms of function and character, they represent a single group, though with marked variations in the verbal formulae employed. As indicated above (5.2), the erection of these inscriptions clearly reflects the Tetrarchic taxation-reform of AD 297, and several of them are explicitly dated to this year. The attempt by W. Goffart, *Caput and Colonate* (1974), 44 and 129–130, to deny any connection between this process and the reform of taxation is not convincing. But it must certainly be admitted that the precise connection between these inscriptions marking out boundaries, on the one hand, and the forms of taxation on the other, is obscure.

The inscriptions will be presented in the order indicated above, which in Roman terms means taking in sequence the *provinciae* of Syria Coele, Syria Phoenice, Syria Palaestina (probably) and Arabia. Whether any come from Syria Palaestina remains uncertain, because all of the known markers come from the east side of the Huleh Valley (or actually on the Golan Heights), and none from Galilee proper or Judaea. In any case we do not know exactly where the 'borders' between Syria Phoenice, Arabia and Syria Palaestina lay in the Tetrarchic period. Discussion of the provincial boundaries has been greatly confused by the use of a seventh-century manuscript, the so-called *Laterculus Veronensis,* with a list of the provinces believed to go back to the Tetrarchic period. But, as noted above, there is no contemporary evidence for a province called either 'Arabia Augusta Libanensis' (so W. Seston, *Dioclétien et la Tétrarchie* I, 1948, 374ff.) or 'Augusta Libanensis.' For a properly cautious discussion of the latter, also questioning whether in principle the operations of *censitores* coincided with provincial boundaries, see A. Alt, "Augusta Libanensis", *ZDPV* 71 (1955), 173. All that is clear is that the same *censitor,* Aelius Statutus, is attested at work in the area around Damascus (nos. 16, 17, 18), in Gaulanitis (nos. 19, 24, 29) and in the Huleh Valley (no. 22).

It should probably be assumed that a similar operation was conducted everywhere in the Near East, and perhaps throughout the Empire. The texts of the inscriptions appear to suggest that they themselves were put up by the *censitores.* If that is so, the erratic survival of documents of this sort is due to subsequent conditions, rather than (as is often the case with inscriptions) to choices made at the time by interested parties.

The fullest discussion of these inscriptions to date is A. Deléage, *La capitation du Bas-Empire* (1945), 152ff.; note also especially H. Seyrig, "Bornes cadastrales du Ǧebel Sim'ān", in G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord* III (1958), 6ff.

It has not seemed worthwhile to reproduce all the texts, often fragmentary, from the printed editions, especially in the absence of direct work on the stones themselves. So most will merely be listed, with salient details noted. But a few more complete texts will be given as illustrations.

COMMAGENE, NEAR DOLICHE

1(?). *IGR* III, no. 1002 = *IGLS* I, no. 59. AD 293/305.
Side 1. Dating by Tetrarchs of AD 293/305, followed by 'Αρδούλων ẹα(?) τοὺς ὅρους.
Side 2. Same text, more worn, with ΕΛΛΑΚΑ[. .] in l. 8.

THE LIMESTONE MASSIF

Note the map of the locations of these inscriptions in Tchalenko, *Villages Antiques* III, p. 51, fig. 1. All the known ones from the limestone massif come from an area south of Brad in the Jebel Seman, and some 30 km north-west of Aleppo (see the fold-out maps in the same volume).

2. Seyrig in Tchalenko, op. cit., p. 7, no. 8 = *SEG* XX, no. 335; cf. *BE* (1959), no. 459.

Burq Heidar. AD 297.

Erected ὑπὲρ σωτηρ(ί)ας καὶ [δια]μονῆς of the Tetrarchs. Establishment of ὅρ[οι] κώμης Καπροκηρων, ἐπὶ Ἰου(λίου) Σαβίνου τοῦ λαμπροτάτου κηνσείτορ[ος]. The dating, year 345 of the era of Antioch, in the month Panemos, can be restored by the parallel with nos. 3–6 and 9 below.

3. Seyrig, p. 8, no. 8a = *SEG* XX, no. 336.

Kafr Lab. AD 297.

Names of Tetrarchs missing; ὅροι [κωμῆς Καπρ]ολιαβων, under Iulius Sabinus, *kēnsitōr.* Dating as ἔτους εμτ´ (345), Πανήμου ή.

4. Seyrig, p. 8, no. 8b = *SEG* XX, no. 337, noting two further texts, not published.

Kafr Lab. AD 297.

This relatively complete text is worth giving in full as an example of the nature and lay-out of this visible expression of the Tetrarchic state in a rural locality.

ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας
καὶ νείκης
τῶν κυρίων ἡμῶν
Διοκλητιανοῦ καὶ
Μαξιμιανοῦ τῶν
Σεβαστῶν κ(αὶ) Κων-
σταντ[ίου]
κ(αὶ) Μαξιμιανοῦ ἐπιφ[αν]-
εστάτων Κεσάρων.
ὅροι ἀνεστάθησαν
κωμῆς Καπρολιαβων
ἐπὶ Ἰουλίου Σαβίνου
[το]ῦ λαμπροτάτου
κηνσίτορος
ἔτους εμτ', Πανήμου
η'.

5. Seyrig, p. 9, no. 8c = *SEG* XX, no. 338.

Kafr Lab. AD 297.

Same text as above, more damaged.

6. Seyrig, p. 9, no. 8 = *SEG* XX, no. 339.

Baziher, AD 297.

Tetrarchs, as above. Establishment of ὅροι ἐπ(οικίας) Ζαερους, ἔτους εμτ' (345), Δεσίου εί, δ(ιὰ) Σαβίνου λαμπρο[τάτου] κινσίτορος.

Note that the modern name of the village derives from the substitution of the term *beth* ('house') for ἐποίκιον or ἐποικία, attached to Ζαερους

7. Seyrig, p. 10, no. 8e = *SEG* XX, no. 340.
Between Kafr Nabo and Brad. AD 293/305.
Fragmentary reference to Tetrarchs, as above. ἀ[νεστά]θησα[ν ὅροι . . . . κα]προ[. . .].
The names of both of the modern villages are attested on local inscriptions. *IGLS* II, no. 359 (Brad) has ἐν Καπερναβου, and no. 530 has Καπροβαραδ.

8. Seyrig, p. 10, no. 8f = *SEG* XX, no. 341.
Near Kafr Nabo. AD 293/305.
Fragmentary formula for victory of Tetrarchs.

9. Seyrig, p. 11, no. 9 = *SEG* XX, no. 342.
Ferkan. AD 297.
Tetrarchs. ὅροι ἐπ(οικίου) καπερου[.]αμεως.
Name of Sabinus(?) as κηνσίτορος missing. Year 345, month Lōos.

10. J. Jarry, "Inscriptions arabes, syriaques et grecques du Massif du Bélus en Syrie du Nord", *Annales Islamologiques* 7 (1967), 139, p. 158, no. 33 and Pl. XLII = *AE* (1968), no. 514.
Near Kbesin, in the area of Kafr Lab.
Tetrarchs. Establishment of ὅροι [κώμης] Καπροκηνων by Iulius Sabinus. Year 345, Panemos.

11. Jarry, p. 159, no. 34 and Pl. XLII = *AE* (1968), no. 515.
Near Kbesin. AD 297.
Tetrarchs. Establishment of [ὅροι κ]ώμ[ης Καπρο]χερκεων by Iulius Sabinus. Year 345, Panemos.

12. Jarry, p. 160, no. 35 = *AE* (1968), no. 516.
Burj Abdalou, on the route between Deir Seman and river Afrin. AD 293/305.
Tetrarchs. ὅροι KPONEA, rest illegible. Date uncertain.

NEAR JISHR ES SHOGHUR, IN THE NORTHERN ORONTES VALLEY

13. M. Adunolfi, "Una iscrizione greca inedita e la 'capitatio' di Diocleziano", *Oriens Antiquus* 4 (1965), 71.
Near the Nahr el-Abyad, a tributary of the Orontes. AD 293/305.
ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας κὲ νίκης of the Tetrarchs. ἀνεστάθησαν ὅ[ρ]οι ε.π[. . .].

14. Jarry, p. 160, no. 36 = *AE* (1968), no. 517.
Mesmesan, near Jishr es Shoghur. AD 293/305.
Tetrarchs. ὅροι Καπ[ρο]μεταλ[. . .].

TERRITORY OF EMESA

15(?). *IGLS* V, no. 2560 = *AE* (1947), no. 146.
Zaidal, 5 km east of Emesa/Homs. AD 293/305(?).
[ὑπὲρ σωτηρ]ίας καὶ νί(κ)ης τῶν κυρίων ἡμῶν Ἀυτοκράτορων Καίσαρων ὅρο[ι] Σαχαμῶ<ν?> <ἐξ?> ἄρκτο<υ>.

REGION OF DAMASCUS

For a sketch-map with the location of the then known boundary-markers in this area, as well as the Golan Heights, the Huleh Valley and the Hauran, see *'Atiqot* 1 (1955), 113.

16. R. Mouterde, *MUSJ* 16 (1932), 234–235 = *SEG* VII, no. 248 = *AE* (1933), no. 145.
Daraya, *circa* 8 km south-west of Damascus. AD 293/305.
As the formula used in this province was different, the full text and lay-out of this relatively well-preserved example is given:

Διοκλητειανὸς
καὶ Μαξειμιανὸς Σεβ.
καὶ Κωνστάντις
καὶ Μαξειμιανὸς Καίσαρες
λ[ίθ]ον διορίζοντα ἀγροὺς
κώμης Μέζζης καὶ
ΠΑΜΟΙΩΝ στηριχθῆναι
ἐκέλευσαν φροντίδι
Αἰλίου Στατούτου
τοῦ διασημοτάτου.

The modern village of Mezze is situated 3–4 km to the north-east of the find-spot of the boundary-marker.

17. Mouterde, p. 235 = *SEG* VII, no. 247 = *AE* (1933), no. 144.
Between Jisrin and Saqba in the oasis of Damascus, some 8 km east of the city. AD 293/305.
Same formula and reference to Aelius Statutus (named on seven markers; see *PLRE* I "Statutus": nos. 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 24, 29).
λίθον διορίζοντα ἀγροὺς κώμης ΒΕΤΟΣ(or E)ΜΑΡΑΣ κὲ κώμης ENΑΑΣΟ (or ENAKAENAΣ).

18. L. Jalabert, "Aelius Statutus, governeur de Phénicie (*ca.* 293–305)", *MUSJ* 3 (1908–9), 313, p. 317; cf. 4 (1910), 223; *AE* (1908), no. 195.
Jermana, south-east of Damascus. AD 293/305.

Tetrarchs. [λίθο]ν διο<ρ>ίζ(ι)οντα ἀπ[ὸ κώμης?] Γι[ν]δαρων(?). Establishment by Aelius Statutus.

SEG VII, no. 246, is too uncertain to include in the list.

GAULANITIS AND THE HULEH VALLEY

19. G. Dalman, "Inschriften aus dem Ostjordanland", *ZDPV* 36 (1913), 249, no. 1.
Near Kuneitra. AD 293/305.
Tetrarchs. λίθον διορίζοντα κωμ(ῶν?) Σαρισῶν καὶ Βερνίκης. Aelius Statutus.

20. S. Applebaum, B. Isaac and Y. Landau, "Varia Epigraphica", *SCI* 4 (1978), 133, p. 134, no. 2 = *SEG* XXVIII, no. 1426 = *AE* (1984), no. 903.
Hared near Kuneitra. AD 293/305.
Tetrarchs (fragmentary). λίθον [δ]ιορί[ζον]τ̣α̣ ἄγρο[υς . .] *or* ὄ̣ρο̣[υς . .].

21. P. Porat, "A New Boundary Stone from the Southern Golan", *SCI* 10 (1989–90), 130.
Southern Golan. AD 293/305.
Tetrarchs. λίθο(ν) διορίζοντα ἐν <ο> ὅροις κώ(μης) ΚΑΠΑΡΗΑΡΙΒΟΥ. ΑΜ[.]Α[.]ΦΛΥΟΥ κὲ ΑΓΕΛΙΠΟΥ κηνσ(ιτόρων).
As will be seen, the area where establishment of boundary-markers by Aelius Statutus is recorded extends further west than this, into the Huleh Valley. But, whatever the reading, two (as it seems) other *censitores* are mentioned here.

22. B. W. Bacon, "A New Inscription from Upper Galilee", *AJA* 11 (1907), 315; J. Offord, *PEFQSt* (1908), 260; L. Jalabert, *MUSJ* 3 (1908–9), 40; *AE* (1907), no. 145.
Upper Huleh Valley, west of Banias (Caesarea Philippi). AD 293/305.
Tetrarchs. λίθον διορίζοντα ἀγροὺς ἐποικίου ΧΡΗΣΙΜΙΑΝΟΥ. Aelius Statutus.

23(?). S. Applebaum, B. Isaac and Y. Landau, "VariaEpigraphica", *SCI* 6 (1982), 98, no. 1 = *SEG* XXXII, no. 1459.
From Golan, exact find-spot not known. Date uncertain.
λίθος [δι]ορίζω(ν) τὰ ὅρια τοῦ Πανίου κὲ τῆς πόλεως.
Not certain whether this is Tetrarchic.

24. Y. Aharoni, "Three New Boundary-Stones from the Western Golan", *'Atiqot* 1 (1955), p. 109, no. 1 = *AE* (1956), no. 34 = *SEG* XVI, no. 822.
Kibbutz Shamir, on the edge of the Golan Heights, some 28 km north of the Sea of Galilee.

[Διο]κλητιανὸς καὶ
Μαξιμιανὸς Σεββ.,
Κωνστάντιος καὶ
Μαξιμιανὸς Καί-
σαρες
λίθον διορίζοντα
ἀγροὺς κω(μῶν) Γαλα-
νιας καὶ Μιγηρα-
μης στηριχθῆνε
ἐκέλευσαν φροντί-
δι Αἰλ. Στατούτου
τοῦ διασημ.

25(?). Y. Aharoni, pp. 109–110, no. 2 = *AE* (1956), no. 35 = *SEG* XVI, no. 823.
Same area as no. 24. AD 293/305?
λίθος διορίζων ὅρια κω(μῶν) *or* κώ(μης) Μιγηραμης κὲ Γαλανιας.
For Γαλανια see nos. 24 and 31.

26(?). Y. Aharoni, p. 110, no. 3 = *AE* (1956), no. 36, = *SEG* XVI, no. 821.
Northern Huleh Valley, *circa* 1 km south of no. 22. AD 293/305?
λίθον διορίζοντα Μαμσιας κὲ Βεθ Αχων.
There is much clearer likelihood that nos. 26–28 belong to the Tetrarchic series than is the case for no. 25. See no. 29.

27. Y. Aharoni, "Two Additional Boundary-Stones from the Ḥule Valley", *‘Atiqot* 2 (1959), 152, no. 13 = *SEG* XVIII, no. 620.
Same area as nos. 24–25. AD 293/305?
λίθον διορίζοντα κωμ(ης?) Δηρας καὶ Καπαρ[μ]ιγη[ραμης].
Probably the same village as named in no. 25. See also no. 29.

28. Y. Aharoni, pp. 153–154, no. 14 = *SEG* XVIII, no. 621; cf. XIX, no. 902.
Same area as nos. 24–25 and 27. AD 293/305?
λίθ[ον δι]ορίζον[τα] ἀγροὺς [κώμης?] ΩΣΕΑΣ [καὶ] [Π]ΕΡΙΣΗΣ.
See nos. 29 and 30 for the names of the villages.

29. Y. Aharoni, "Three New Boundary-Stones from the Hule Valley", *’Atiqot* 3 (1961), 186, no. 15, Pl. XXVIII.1 = *SEG* XIX, no. 901.
Same area as nos. 24–25 and 27–28. AD 293/305.

Διοκλητιανὸς καὶ Μ[αξιμια]νὸς Σεββ.
Κωνστάντις καὶ Μαξι[μιανὸς Καίσαρες]
λίθον διορίζοντα ἀγροὺς [κώμ]η[ς]
Δηρας κὲ Ωσεας στηριχθῆνε
ἐκέλευσαν φροντίδι Αἰλ. Στατοῦτου

τοῦ διασημο.

30. Aharoni, op. cit., 186, no. 16, Pl. XXVIII.2 = *SEG* XIX, no. 902.
Same area as above. Almost certainly AD 293/305.
λίθον διορίζοντα ἀγροὺς κώ[μης] Ωσεας κὲ Περισης.
For ΩΣΕΑΣ see nos. 28–29 and for ΠΕΡΙΣΗΣ see no. 28.

31(?). Aharoni, op. cit. 187, no. 17, Pl. XXVIII.3 = *SEG* XIX, no. 903.
Same area as above. AD 293/305?
λίθος διορίζων ὅρια κώ[μης] Γαλανιας καὶ ὅ(ρια?) Ῥαμης.
For Γαλανια see nos. 24–25.

BATANAEA

The boundaries, if indeed there were clear boundaries, of the area described in antiquity as Batanaea are far from clear. It is used here as an approximate description of the area, from which three boundary-markers are known, which lies between Gaulanitis (the Golan Heights) to the west and the lava-field called Trachonitis, or now Lejja, to the east. See also under nos. 33–34. The three markers all come from a region on either side of Sanamayn, on the present main road between Der'a and Damascus.

32. *IGR* III, no. 1112 = *OGIS*, no. 769.
From Agrabe, some 16 km west-north-west of Sanamayn. AD 293/305.

Δεσπόται ἡμῶν
Διοκλητιανὸς
Μαξιμιανὸς
Σεβαστοὶ καὶ
Κωνστάντειος
καὶ Μαξιμιανὸς
Καίσαρες
λίθον διορίζον-
τα ὅρους μητρ-
οκωμίας 'Ακ-
ράβης καὶ 'Ασί-
χων στηριχθ-
ῆναι ἐκέλευσα-
ν, φροντίδι
Λουκίου καὶ 'Α[κ?]α[κίου?]
κηνσίτορις (κηνσιτόρ<ων>?).

For the importance of the concept of a 'mother-village' *(mētrokōmia)* see 3.3 above. In this case also the place-name has survived as

Agrabe. There is also another village in the area called Osij. It is probable, but not certain, that two *censitores* are named. Cf. no. 35 below.

33. *IGR* III, no. 1252 = *OGIS*, no. 612 (variant readings).

From Namar, a village some 15 km south-west of Sanamayn, and some 10 km south of Agrabe. AD 293/305. Line-divisions not indicated.

Tetrarchs. λίθον διορίζοντα ὅρους κώμης Γα[σ]ιμέας καὶ Ναμαρίων (σ)τηρχ[θ]ῆναι ἐκέλευσαν, φροντίδι Μ. Ἀρρίου Φραιαος (*sic*) π.π. κη(ν)σείτορος.

The second village named must be that referred to by Eusebius, *Onom.*, ed. Klostermann, 138: καὶ νῦν ἐστι Ναμαρὰ κώμη μεγίστη ἐν τη Βαταναία̣. Both names have survived, the first as 'Jasem', a village to the south-east of Namar. The *censitor* is identified as a *primipilaris* (senior centurion).

34. L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde, "Nouvelles inscriptions de Syrie", *MUSJ* 4 (1910), 209, on p. 222.

From Basir, some 4 km east of Sanamayn. AD 293/305.

Fragmentary inscription with Tetrarchs and διορ[ίζοντα λί]θον.

This is quite possibly the place in Batanaea called Bathyra, where Herod settled a colony of Babylonian Jews as a protection against the people of Trachonitis; Josephus, *Ant.* XVII, 2, 221–222 (23–28), see 2.2 above. The place lies about 8 km from the edge of the lava-field.

THE HAURAN

35. M. Dunand, *Syria* 7 (1926), 329 = *SEG* VII, no. 1055 (incomplete text). Full text in M. Dunand, *Le musée de Soueida* (1934), 75, no. 160, Pl. XXXII; cf. L. Robert, *Hellenica* XI–XII (1960), 312–314.

From Juneineh, some 5 km to the east of Maximianopolis/Shaqqa.

οἱ δεσ̣πόται ἡμῶν
Διοκλητιανὸς καὶ
Μα[ξ]ιμιανὸς Σεββ.
καὶ Κωνστάντε̣ιος
καὶ Μαξιμιανὸς
ἐπιφανέστατοι
Καίσαρες λίθον δ-
ιορίζοντα (ἀπὸ] κ̣ώμης
Ὀρέλων ὅρον

Μαξιμιανοπόλ(εως)
στηρικθῆναι ἐκέ-
λευσαν, [φ]ροντ[ί]-
δ̣ι Λουκίου καὶ
Ἀκακίου κηνσι-
τόρων.

The earliest evidence (cf. 5.1 above) for the new city of Maximianopolis. Two *censitores* are at work, and neither will be the governor of the province, which was almost certainly by now Arabia rather than Syria Phoenice. The same two *censitores* are evidently named in no. 32.

36(?). M. Dunand, "Nouvelles inscriptions du Djebel Druze et du Hauran", *RB* 41 (1932), 561, p. 572, no. 109.

From Radeime/Rudeimeh, about 5 km west-south-west of Juneineh (see no. 35). AD 293/305.

The beginnings (ll. 2–7) of an inscription with the names of the Tetrarchs in the nominative, laid out almost exactly as in no. 35.

The resemblance of form, along with its location a short distance from no. 35, is the only reason for supposing, as Dunand did, that this is a boundary-marker.

37(?). *IGR* III, no. 1278.

From Suweida. AD 293/305.

Fragmentary inscription with the names of Diocletian and Maximian, and ὅροι Διον[υσιά]δ[ος?] on one side and [ὅρ]οι Ἀθελεν[ῶ]ν on the other.

Athelena is the village Atil in the territory of Kanatha, discussed in 11.4 above. If 'Dionysias' appears here as the name of Soada, it is the earliest evidence for it. But it is very uncertain whether this inscription belongs among those which reflect the work of the Tetrarchic *censitores*.

APPENDIX
C

MATERIALS FOR THE HISTORY OF ROMAN EDESSA AND OSRHOENE, AD 163–337

What follows represents only a selection of the material, designed for the use of anyone approaching the study of this area from the history of the Roman Empire. I am very grateful to Sebastian Brock for much supplementation and correction, and to Steven Ross, University of California, Berkeley, for corrections.

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23. Sumatar Harabesi, AD 165: "Ruler of 'Arab".
27. Edessa, Citadel (Segal, *Edessa,* Pl. 29a): M'NW P̣SGRB'.
45. Edessa. Funerary mosaic (Segal, *Edessa,* Pl. 17a); now in Istanbul museum.
47. Edessa. Family portrait mosaic (Segal, *Edessa,* Pl. 1).
48. Edessa. Tripod mosaic (Segal, *Edessa,* Pl. 3).
49. Edessa. Phoenix mosaic (Segal, *Edessa,* Pl. 43); AD 235/236.
50. Edessa. Orpheus mosaic (Segal, *Edessa,* Pl. 44); AD 228.
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AE (1984), no. 919: (Kizilburc, between Zeugma and Edessa, AD 195): ‘C. Iulius Pacatianus, proc(urator) Aug(usti), inter provinciam Osrhoenam et regnum Agbari fines posuit’.

AE (1984), no. 920: (ibid., AD 205): ‘(Severus, Caracalla and Geta) viam ab Euphrate usque ad fines regni Sept. Ab(g)ari a novo munierunt per L. Aelium Ianuarium proc. Aug. prov. Osrhoenam *(sic)*’.

Rome

CIL VI, no. 1797 = *ILS* no. 857:

‘d.m./ Abgar Prahates / filius, rex / principis(?) Orrhenoru,/ Hodda coniugi bene / merenti fec.’

IGR I, no. 179 = Moretti, *IGUR*, no. 1142:

Ἄβγαρος . . . τύμβον δ᾽ Ἀντωνεῖνος ἑῷ θέτο τοῦτον ἀδελφῷ· οἷσιν ὁ πρὶν Βασιλεὺς Ἄβγαρος ἦν γενέτης.

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A. Dec. 18, 240. Acknowledgment of receipt of debt.

B. Sept. 1, 242. Lease of land (heading only published so far).

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> παρὰ Μάρκου Αὐρηλίου Δε. των ... Σιλβανοῦ Ὀσροηνοῦ δούλην ὀνόματι Βαλσαμέαν γένει Ὀσροηνὴν Μεσοποταμήν.

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A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE KING-LIST OF EDESSA/ORHAI IN THE PERIOD OF ROMAN DOMINATION

The following table presents in summary form a hypothetical list of the later kings of Edessa/Orhai based on that given in the *Chronicle of Zuqnin* (p.

558 above), but corrected in the light of contemporary documents and literary evidence.

I owe the English text of the extracts, as so much else, to the kindness of Sebastian Brock. It will be seen that the anonymous chronicler of the late eighth century, often confusingly referred to as Pseudo-Dionysius of Tel-Mahre, dates (in the relevant sections) by successive 'years of Abraham'. Exactly what, in terms of the years of the Christian era, he will have meant by this is not perfectly clear, and it is by no means certain that he will have been consistent; or, if he were, that the manuscript will have reproduced his figures accurately. He in fact deploys three different eras (plus occasional references to others): that of the Creation, that of Abraham, and the Seleucid era starting from October 312 BC (see Witakowski, *Syriac Chronicle,* 119ff.).

Fortunately, however, he does at the relevant point identify the Nativity as having occurred in year 2015 of Abraham and year 309 'of Alexander the Macedonian' (in our terms 4/3 BC). If the chronicler was consistent, the first of the entries in the table below, given as the year (of Abraham) 2130, should be the Seleucid year 424, or AD 112/113. Ma'nu son of Ma'nu should therefore have reigned, for twenty-four years, until 136/137, before a two-year reign of Wa'el son of Sahru, consistently placed by the chronicler in year 2154 (= Seleucid year 448, AD 136/137). Something must have gone wrong, for we are told by Cassius Dio that the ruler of Osrhoene during Trajan's Parthian war was called Abgar (LXVIII, 18, 1; 21, 1).

Though certainty is impossible, it is clear from the coins of Wa'el that he was a contemporary of Vologaeses IV (148–193), and from those of *a* Ma'nu, or Mannos, that he was a contemporary of Marcus Aurelius (see 12.5 above). The simplest hypothesis therefore is that the sequence of kings as given by the chronicler, while remarkably accurate in itself, is chronologically displaced: as a sequence it is some twenty-six years too early. If this hypothesis is applied to the list, it becomes perfectly consistent with the contemporary documents. The chronology presented below, obviously enough, remains hypothetical.

The 'years of Abraham' and their Seleucid equivalents are given on the left side; then the text of each entry, in Sebastian Brock's translation; then the proposed dates AD; and then key items of contemporary evidence.

Year of Abraham	Seleucid Year	Chronicle	AD (corrected by adding 26 years)	Contemporary Evidence
2130	424	The year 2130: Ma'nu son of Ma'nu reigned over Orhai for 24 years; and he crossed into Roman territory (BT RWMY ').	138/139–162/163	
2154	448	The year 2154: Wa'el son of Sahru reigned over Orhai for 2 years and after him Ma'nu son of Izat (Ma'nu?) reigned, having returned from Roman territory, for 12 years. The total of his entire reign was 36 years, excluding the years he was in Roman territory.	162/163–164/165 164/165–176/167	Coins of W'L MLK' with Vologaeses IV Coins of ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΜΑΝΝΟΣ ΦΙΛΟΡΩΜΑ(ιος) with Marcus Aurelius (161–180)
2169	463	Abgar son of Ma'nu reigned over Orhai for 35 years (strict addition of 26 years here seems to produce one year too many, see below).	176/177–211/212(?)	(a) Coins of ΑΒΓΑΡΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ with Commodus (180–192) and Septimius Severus (193–211) (b) *AE* (1984), no. 919 (AD 195): 'regnum Abgari'; no. 920 (AD 205): 'fines regni Sept. Ab(g)ari' (c) *Chron. Edess.* 1: Seleucid year 513 (AD 201/202), reign of Severus and King Abgar son of Ma'nu
2203	497	. . . And over Orhai Abgar Severus (SWRWS) reigned with his son for 1 year and 7 months.	211/212–212/213?	Coins of Caracalla and (Abgar?) ΣΕΟΥΗ(ρος), *BMC Mesop.*, p. 96

Year of Abraham	Seleucid Year	Chronicle	AD (corrected by adding 26 years)	Contemporary Evidence
		And after him Ma'nu his son reigned for 26 years.	212/213–238/239	Syriac Parchment A (*CRAI* 1991, 144): Ma'nu PṢGRYB', son of Abgar the king
		[No further entries relating to kings]	[239/240 (Sel. 551)	Syriac Parchment A: year 1 of Aelius Septimius Abgar, king]
			240/241 (Sel. 552)	Syriac Parchment A: year 2 of Aelius Septimius Abgar, king, and year 3 of Gordian III (238–244)
				Coins of ΑΒΓΑΡΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ and Gordian III

Syriac Parchment B shows that the Seleucid year 553 (AD 241/242) was year 30 of the 'liberation' of the *colonia,* and *P. Dura,* no. 28, that Seleucid year 554 (AD 242/243) was year 31. Year 1 was therefore AD 212/213, and it will have been in this year that a king Abgar was deposed by Caracalla, and colonial status given to Edessa/Orhai.

Syriac Parchment A shows that the king Aelius Septimius Abgar, whose first regnal year will have been the Seleucid year 551, AD 239/240, was the son of Ma'nu PṢGRYB' ('crown-prince' or 'heir-apparent'), and that he in turn was the son of a king Abgar. The twenty-six years given to Ma'nu by the chronicler therefore fit exactly into 212/213–238/239. His father, 'Abgar the king', could have been either the Abgar Severus of 211/212–212/213 or Abgar 'the Great'. Iulius Africanus, *Kestoi* I, 20, 28–65, confirms that *a* king called Abgaros had a son called Mannos, but does not serve to determine which. Since Abgar 'the Great' began to rule, as it seems, in AD 176/177, it is perhaps unlikely that a son of his was still 'ruling', as 'crown-prince', sixty years later. But the question need not be decided.

MAPS

The twelve maps which follow are designed solely to assist comprehension of the text of the book. Map I is an outline map of the Near East, with indications of the areas covered in the following maps. Map II covers most of the Roman Near East, and is intended as a guide to the main sites and most important geographical features, above all mountain-ranges and rivers. Maps III–XII cover the various sub-regions of the Roman Near East, with in some cases smaller or larger degrees of overlap.

While every attempt has been made to represent physical features accurately, the small scale means that inevitably the maps have something of the character of sketch-maps. They should give a useful impression of the relationships between individual sites and their geographical contexts. But they should not be used for reading off precise distances.

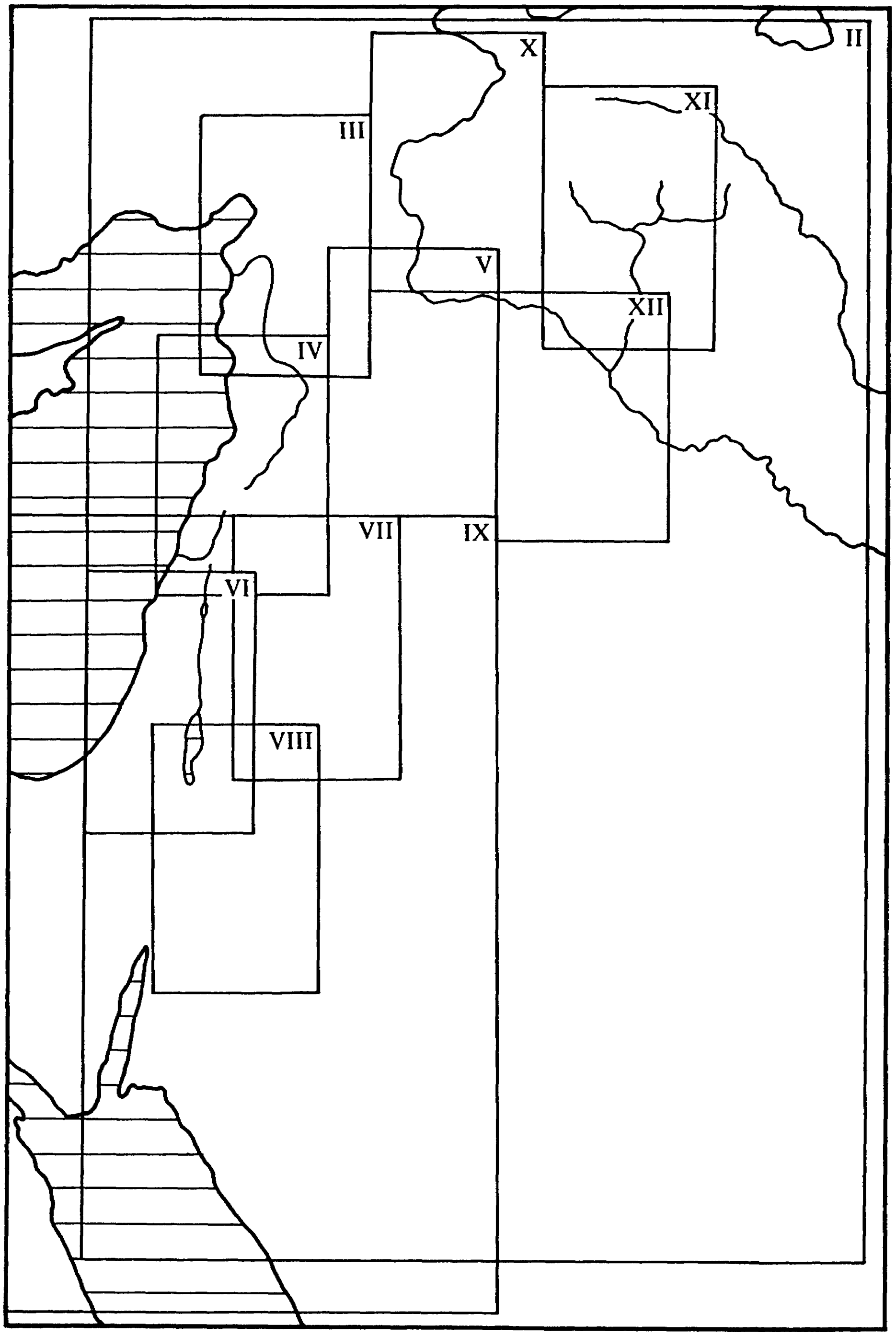
Where there are modern place-names which are in general use—for instance Jerusalem, Tyre or Antioch—these are used. Otherwise ancient names are given in their Latin form and in capitals. No attempt has been made to indicate the full complexity of changing official titles, for instance those of places which became Roman *coloniae.* In some of the many instances where places changed their names, both names have been given, where space allows. Where necessary for clarity, and to make it easier to relate the maps to the text, modern names, in simplified form, have been given in lower case.

It should be emphasized that the maps make no attempt to indicate all the known ancient sites, still less to give an impression of overall settlement-patterns, and are designed solely to make it possible to locate, directly or by reference to other places, all the sites and regions mentioned in the text.

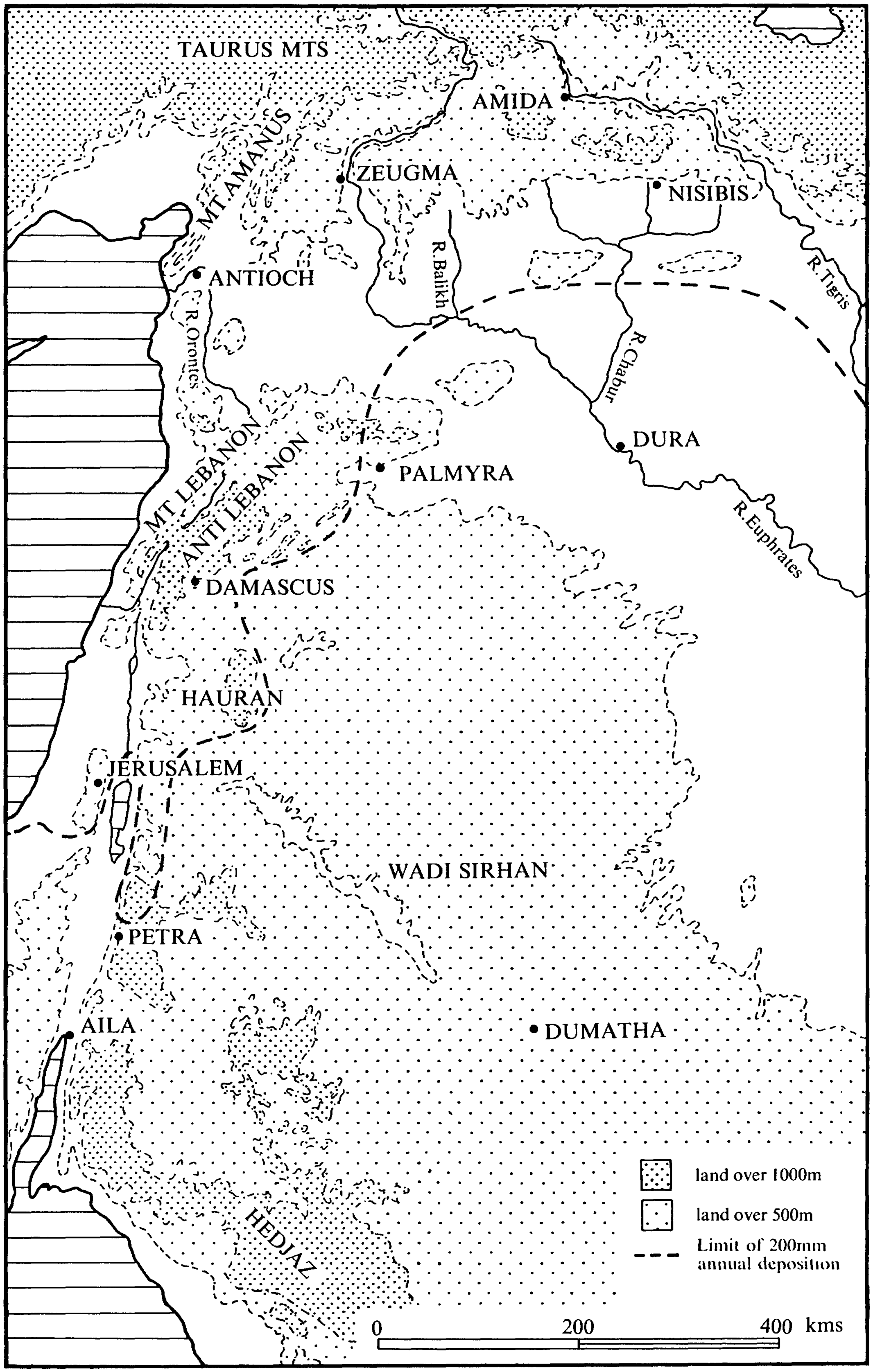
I THE NEAR EAST: AREAS COVERED BY MAPS II–XII
II THE ROMAN NEAR EAST: MAIN SITES AND GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES
III NORTHWESTERN SYRIA AND MOUNT AMANUS
IV THE PHOENICIAN COAST AND WESTERN SYRIA PHOENICE
V THE CENTRAL SYRIAN STEPPE, PALMYRA AND THE EUPHRATES
VI JUDAEA/SYRIA PALAESTINA, WESTERN ARABIA
VII SOUTHEASTERN SYRIA PHOENICE, NORTHERN ARABIA
VIII PETRA AND SOUTH-CENTRAL ARABIA
IX ARABIA, WITH SINAI, THE RED SEA AND THE HEDJAZ
X EASTERN SYRIA, THE EUPHRATES AND WESTERN MESOPOTAMIA
XI CENTRAL MESOPOTAMIA AND MONS MASIUS
XII THE EASTERN SYRIAN STEPPE AND THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES

THE NEAR EAST: AREAS COVERED BY MAPS II-XII

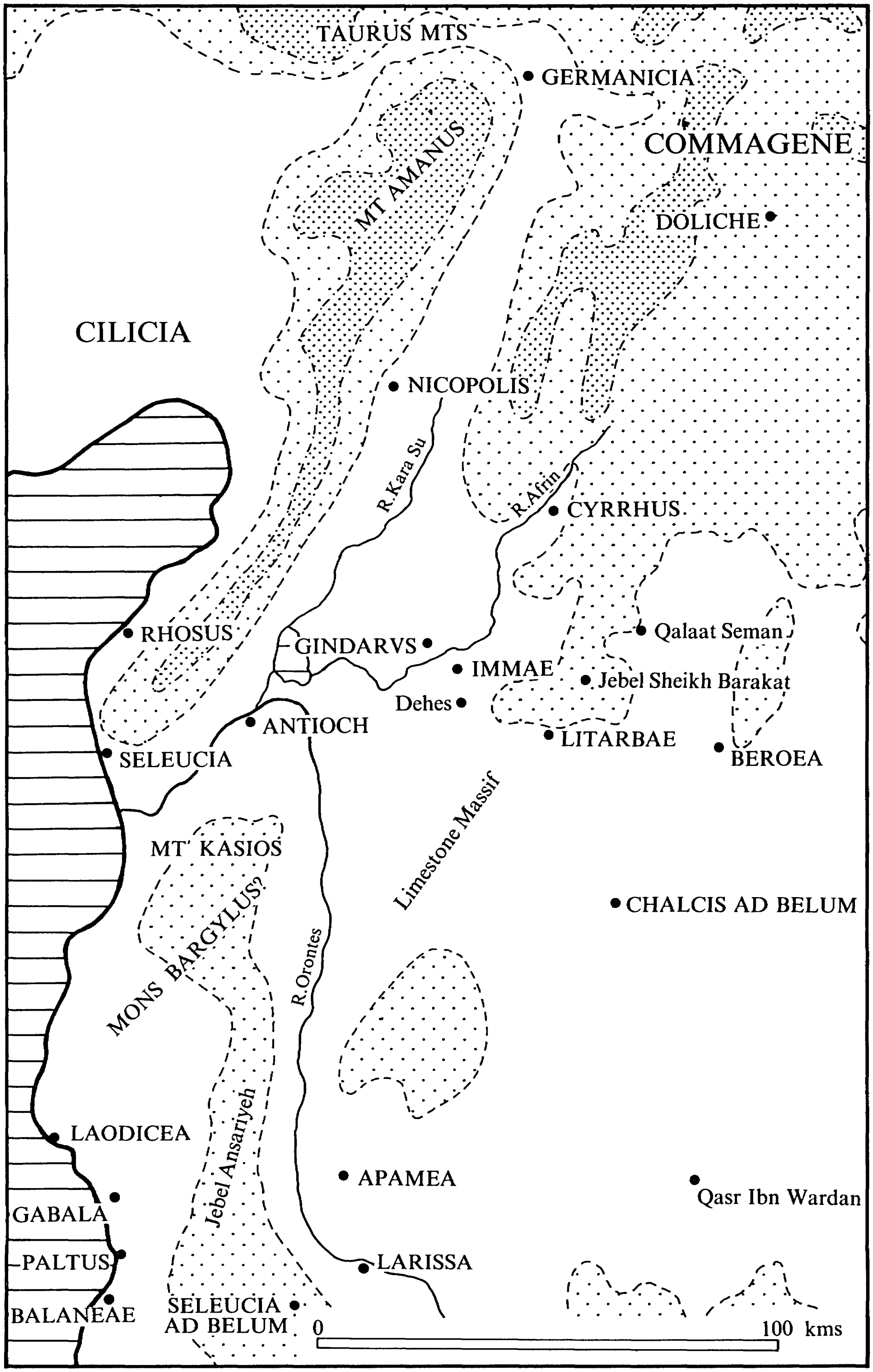
I


II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI
XII

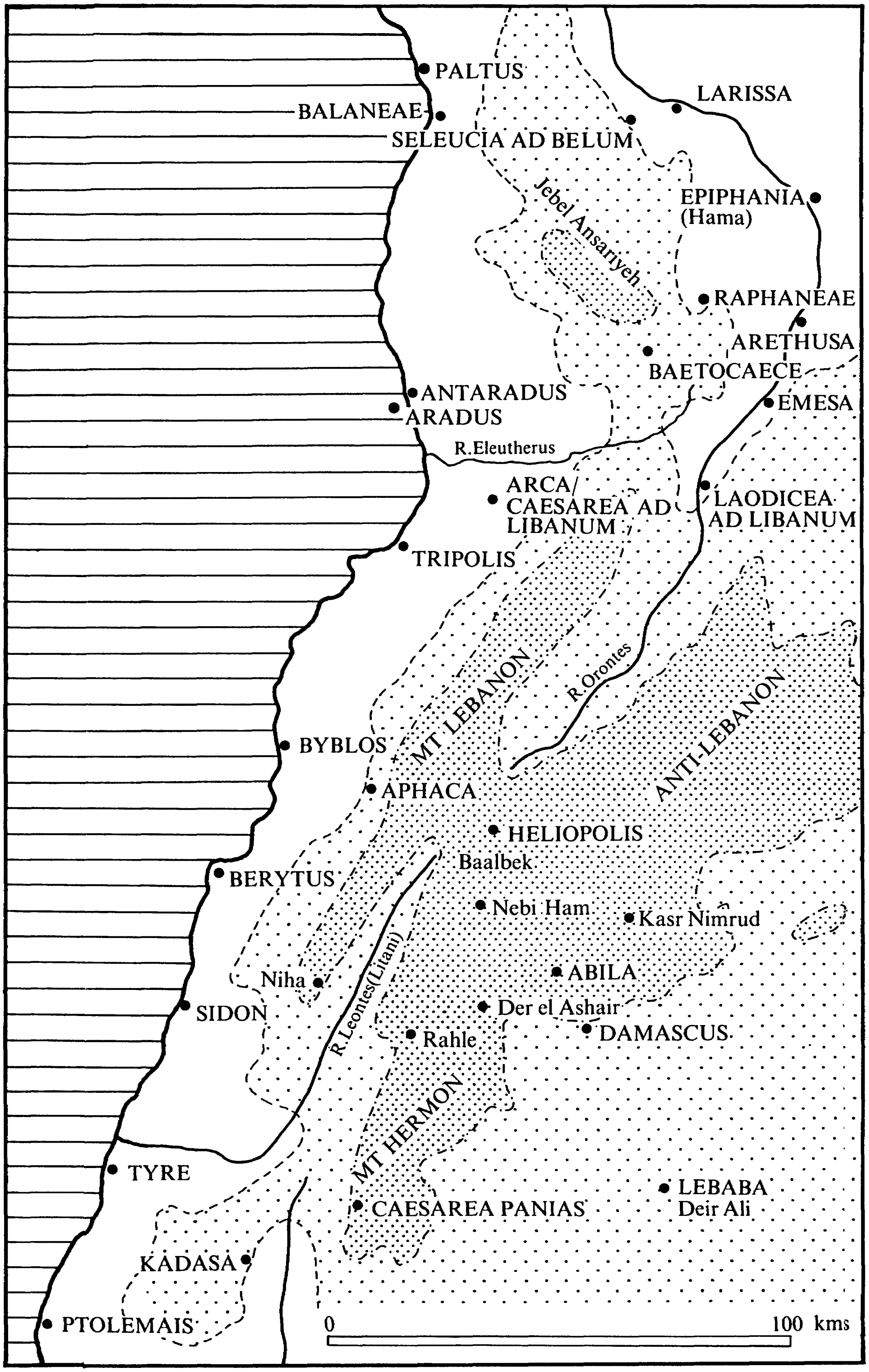
THE ROMAN NEAR EAST II


TAURUS MTS
AMIDA
MT AMANUS
ZEUGMA
NISIBIS
ANTIOCH
R.Balikh
R.Tigris
R.Orontes
R.Chabur
MT LEBANON
ANTI LEBANON
PALMYRA
DURA
R.Euphrates
DAMASCUS
HAURAN
JERUSALEM
WADI SIRHAN
PETRA
AILA
DUMATHA
HEDJAZ
land over 1000m
land over 500m
Limit of 200mm annual deposition
0
200
400 kms

NORTHWESTERN SYRIA AND MT AMANUS III

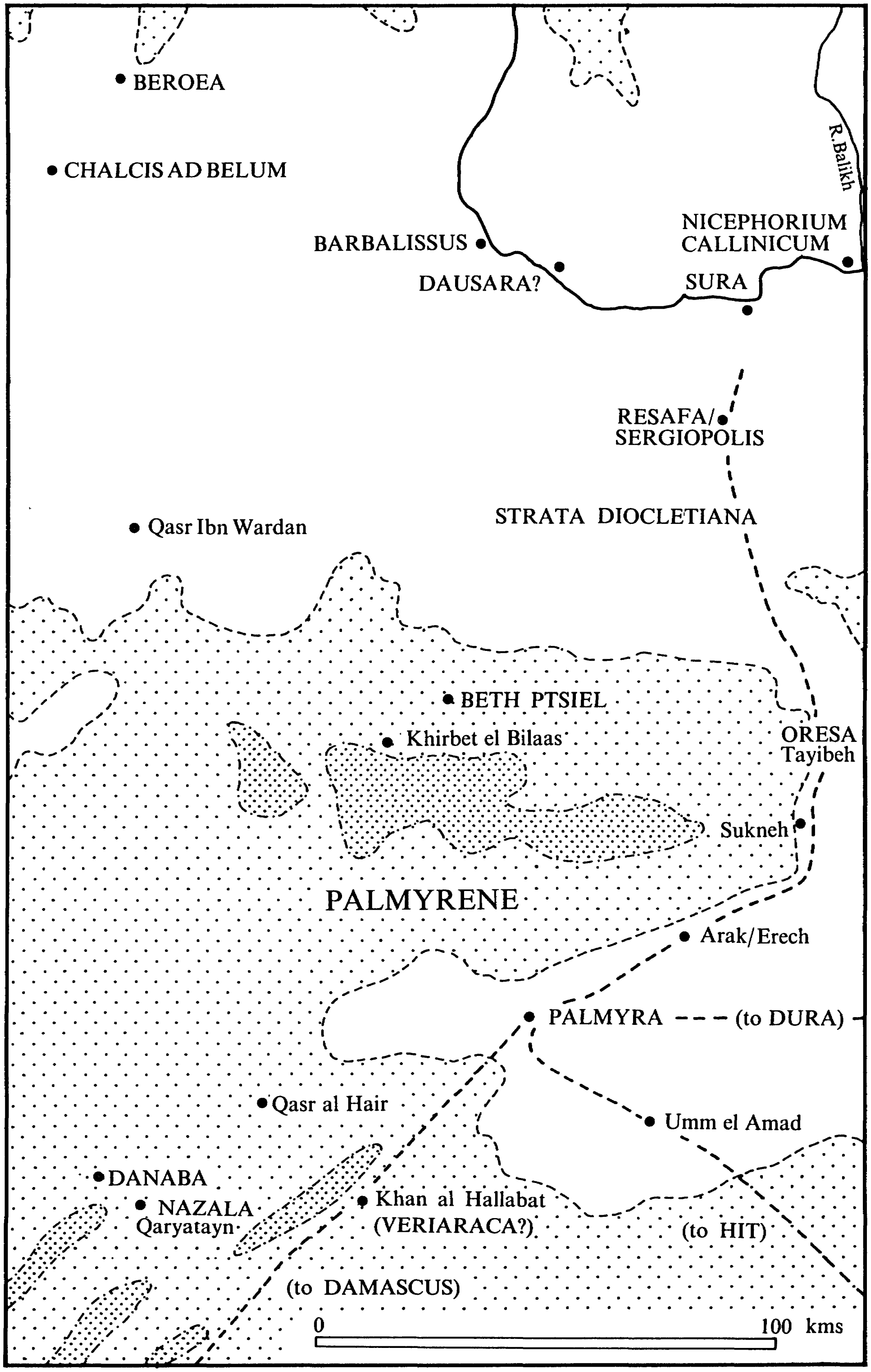

TAURUS MTS
GERMANICIA
COMMAGENE
MT AMANUS
DOLICHE
CILICIA
NICOPOLIS
R. Kara Su
R. Afrin
CYRRHUS
RHOSUS
GINDARVS
Qalaat Seman
IMMAE
Jebel Sheikh Barakat
Dehes
ANTIOCH
LITARBAE
BEROEA
SELEUCIA
Limestone Massif
MT KASIOS
MONS BARGYLUS?
CHALCIS AD BELUM
R. Orontes
LAODICEA
Jebel Ansariyeh
APAMEA
Qasr Ibn Wardan
GABALA
PALTUS
LARISSA
BALANEAE
SELEUCIA AD BELUM
0
100 kms

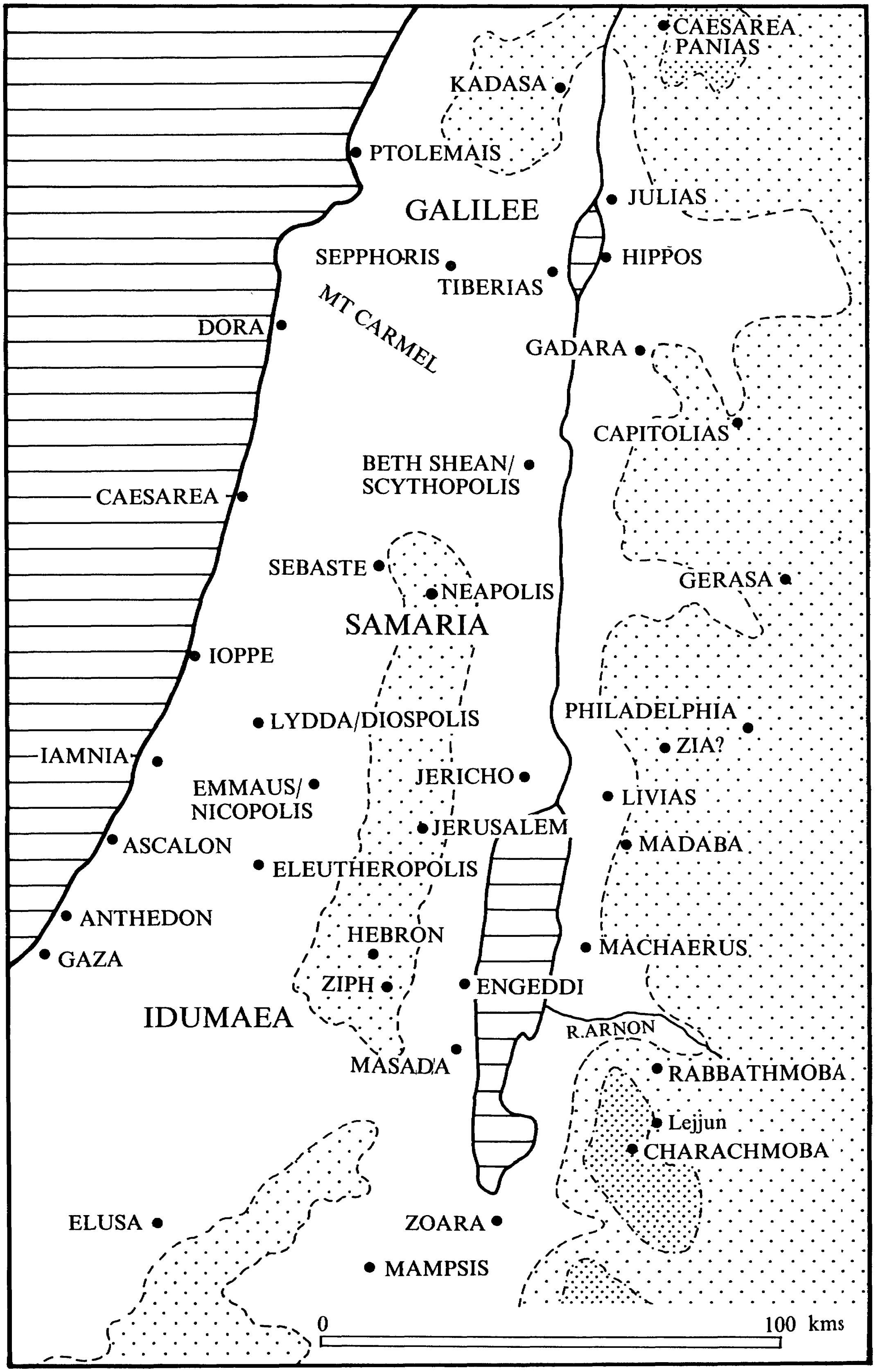
THE PHOENICIAN COAST AND WESTERN SYRIA PHOENICE


PALTUS
BALANEAE
SELEUCIA AD BELUM
LARISSA
Jebel Ansariyeh
EPIPHANIA (Hama)
RAPHANEAE
ARETHUSA
BAETOCAECE
EMESA
ANTARADUS
ARADUS
R.Eleutherus
ARCA/ CAESAREA AD LIBANUM
LAODICEA AD LIBANUM
TRIPOLIS
MT LEBANON
R.Orontes
ANTI-LEBANON
BYBLOS
APHACA
HELIOPOLIS
Baalbek
BERYTUS
Nebi Ham
Kasr Nimrud
ABILA
Niha
R.Leontes(Litani)
SIDON
Der el Ashair
DAMASCUS
Rahle
MT HERMON
TYRE
LEBABA Deir Ali
CAESAREA PANIAS
KADASA
PTOLEMAIS
0
100 kms

THE CENTRAL SYRIAN STEPPE, PALMYRA AND THE EUPHRATES

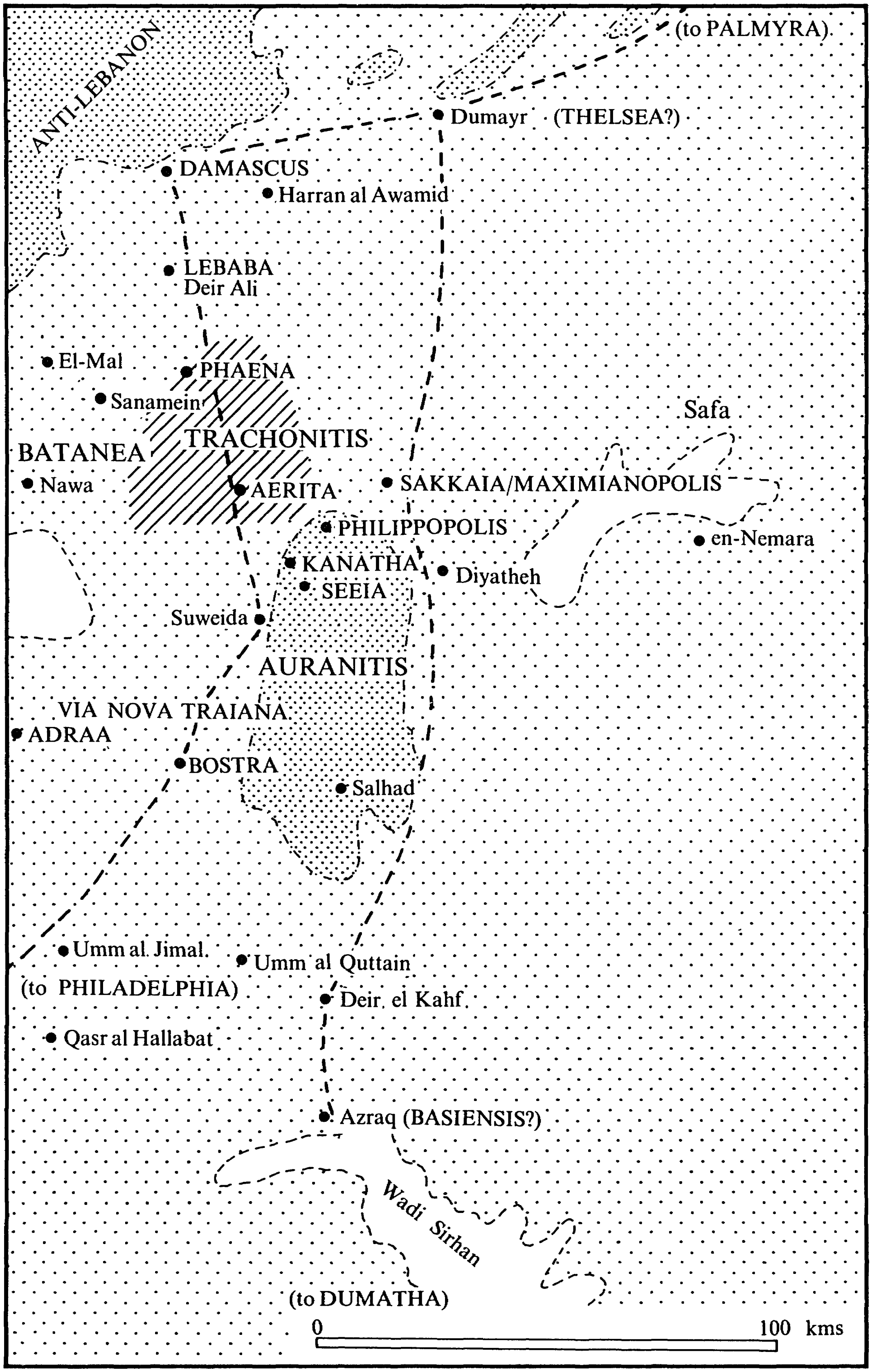
V

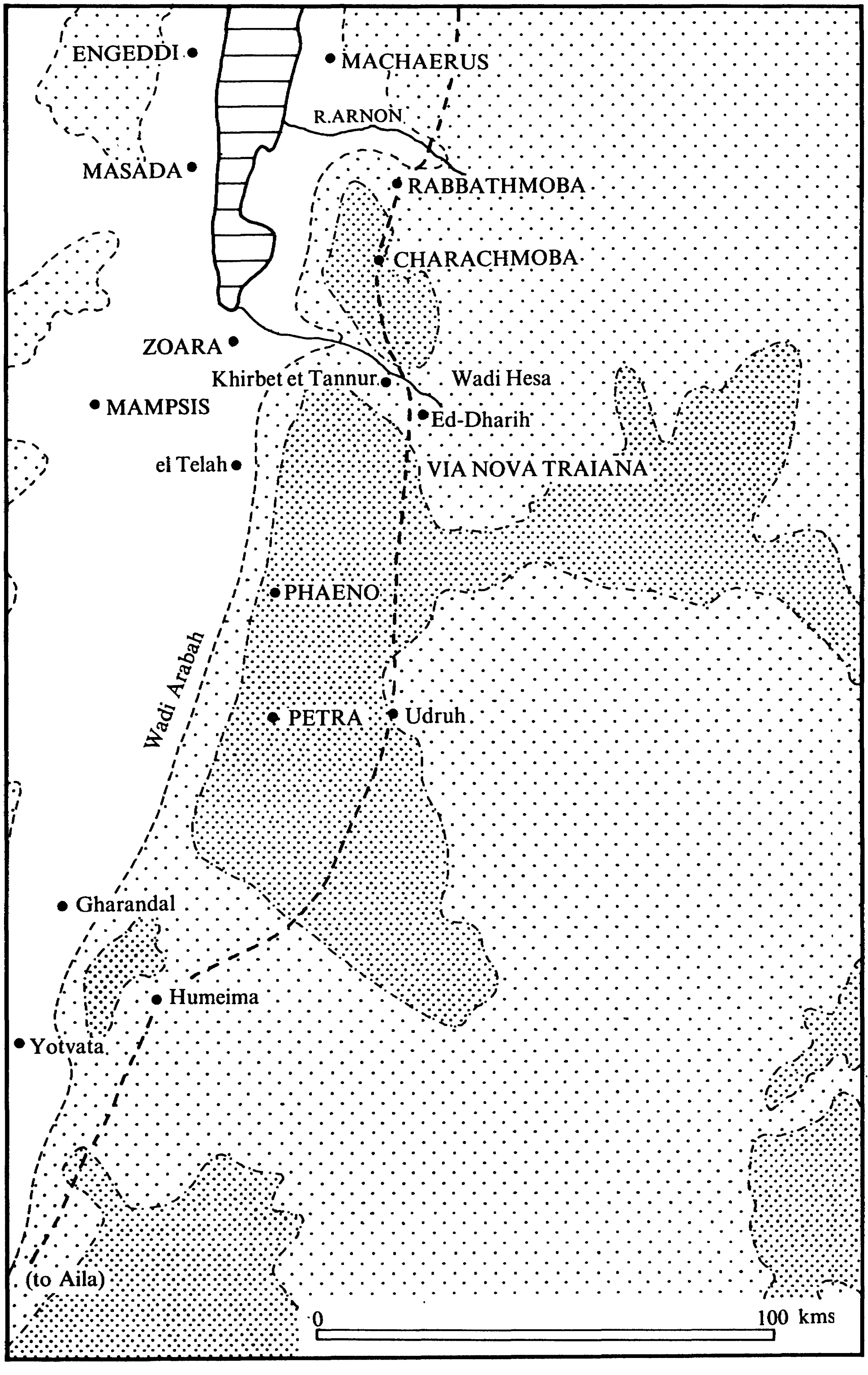

BEROEA
CHALCIS AD BELUM
R.Balikh
BARBALISSUS
NICEPHORIUM
CALLINICUM
DAUSARA?
SURA
RESAFA/
SERGIOPOLIS
STRATA DIOCLETIANA
Qasr Ibn Wardan
BETH PTSIEL
Khirbet el Bilaas
ORESA
Tayibeh
Sukneh
PALMYRENE
Arak/Erech
PALMYRA
(to DURA)
Qasr al Hair
Umm el Amad
DANABA
NAZALA
Qaryatayn
Khan al Hallabat
(VERIARACA?)
(to HIT)
(to DAMASCUS)
0
100 kms

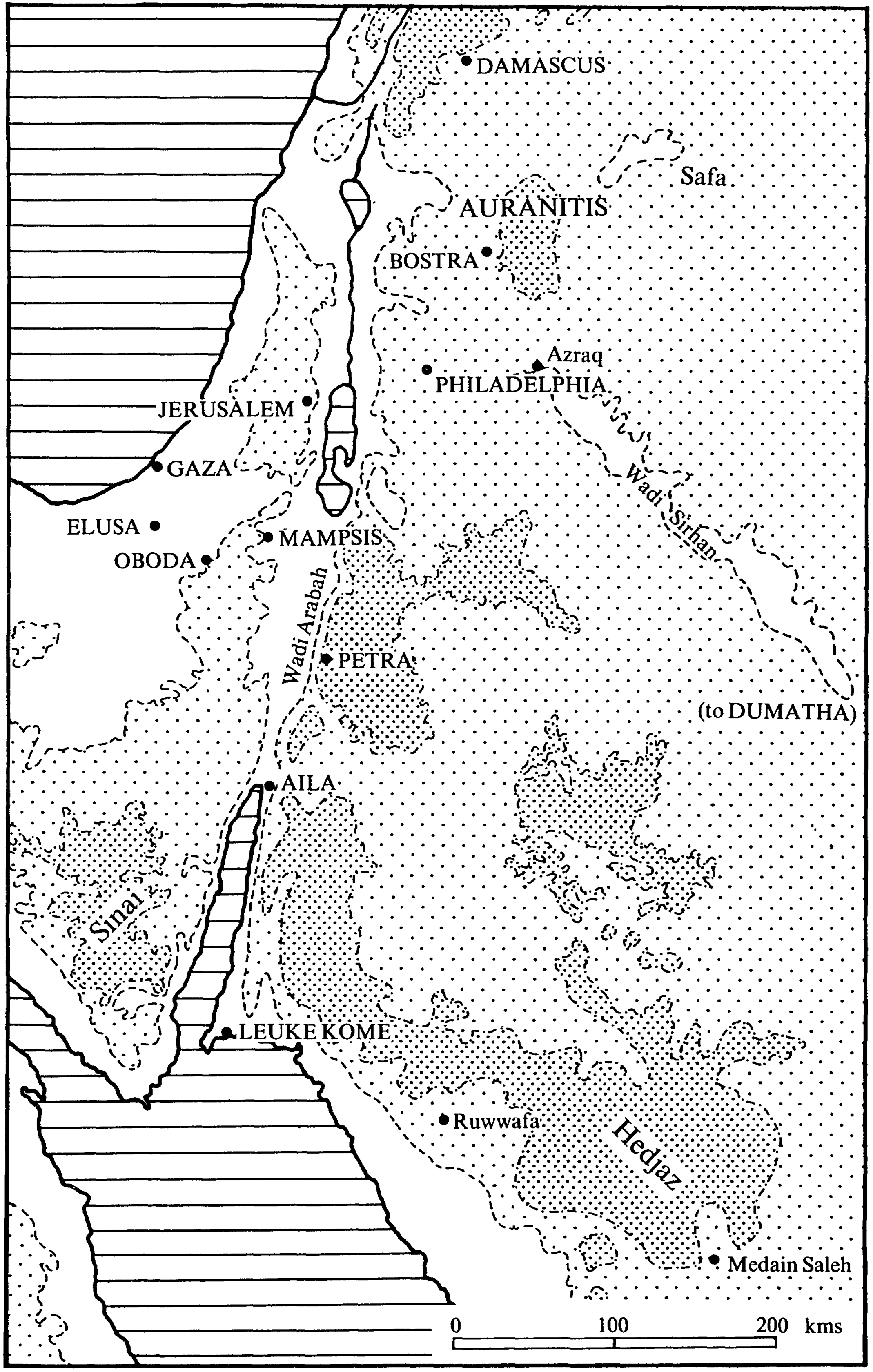

CAESAREA PANIAS
KADASA
PTOLEMAIS
GALILEE
JULIAS
SEPPHORIS
TIBERIAS
HIPPOS
MT CARMEL
DORA
GADARA
CAPITOLIAS
BETH SHEAN/ SCYTHOPOLIS
CAESAREA
SEBASTE
NEAPOLIS
GERASA
SAMARIA
IOPPE
LYDDA/DIOSPOLIS
PHILADELPHIA
ZIA?
IAMNIA
EMMAUS/ NICOPOLIS
JERICHO
LIVIAS
JERUSALEM
MADABA
ASCALON
ELEUTHEROPOLIS
ANTHEDON
HEBRON
MACHAERUS
GAZA
ZIPH
ENGEDDI
IDUMAEA
R.ARNON
MASADA
RABBATHMOBA
Lejjun
CHARACHMOBA
ELUSA
ZOARA
MAMPSIS
0
100 kms

SOUTHEASTERN SYRIA PHOENICE, NORTHERN ARABIA

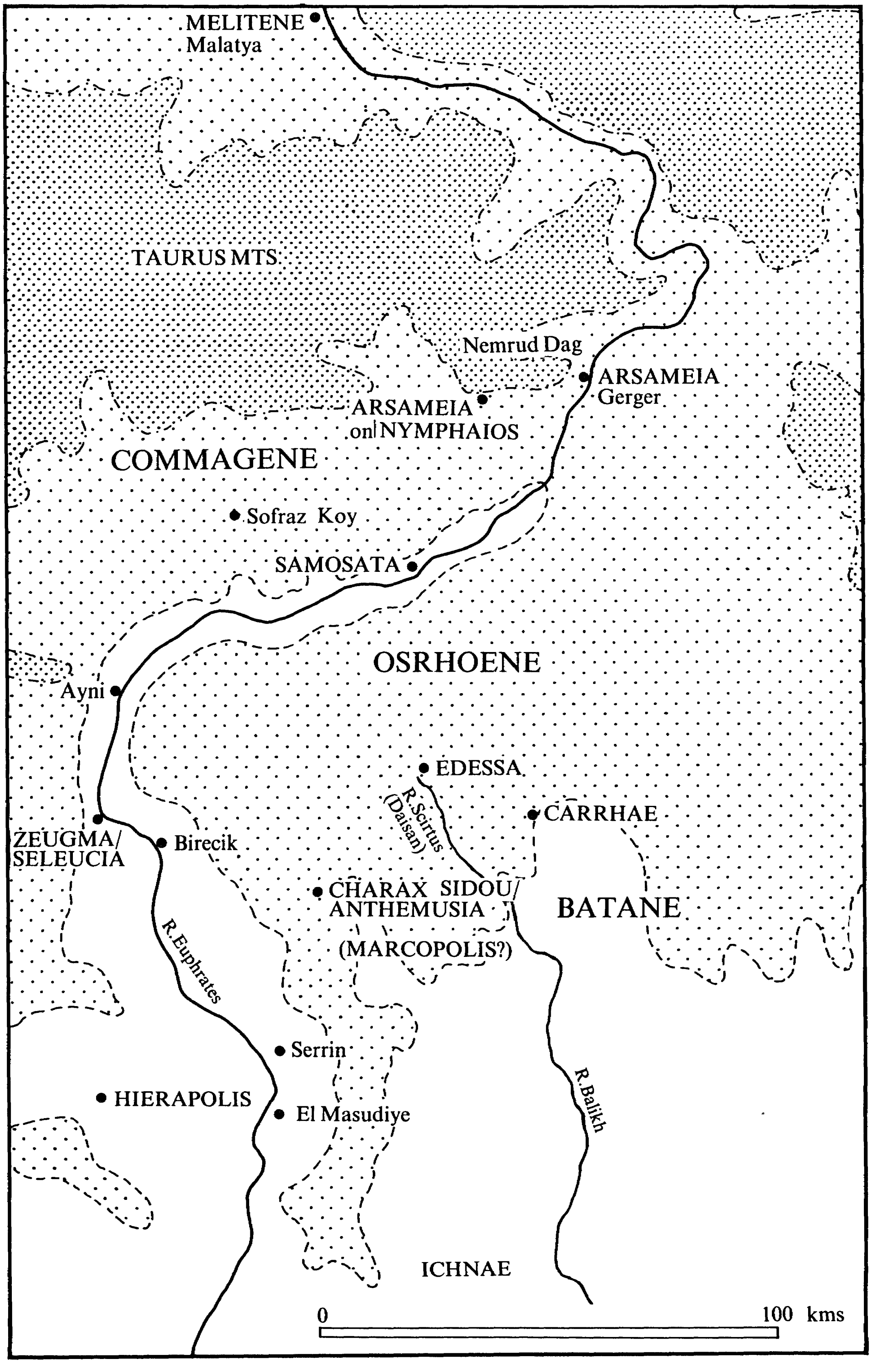
VII

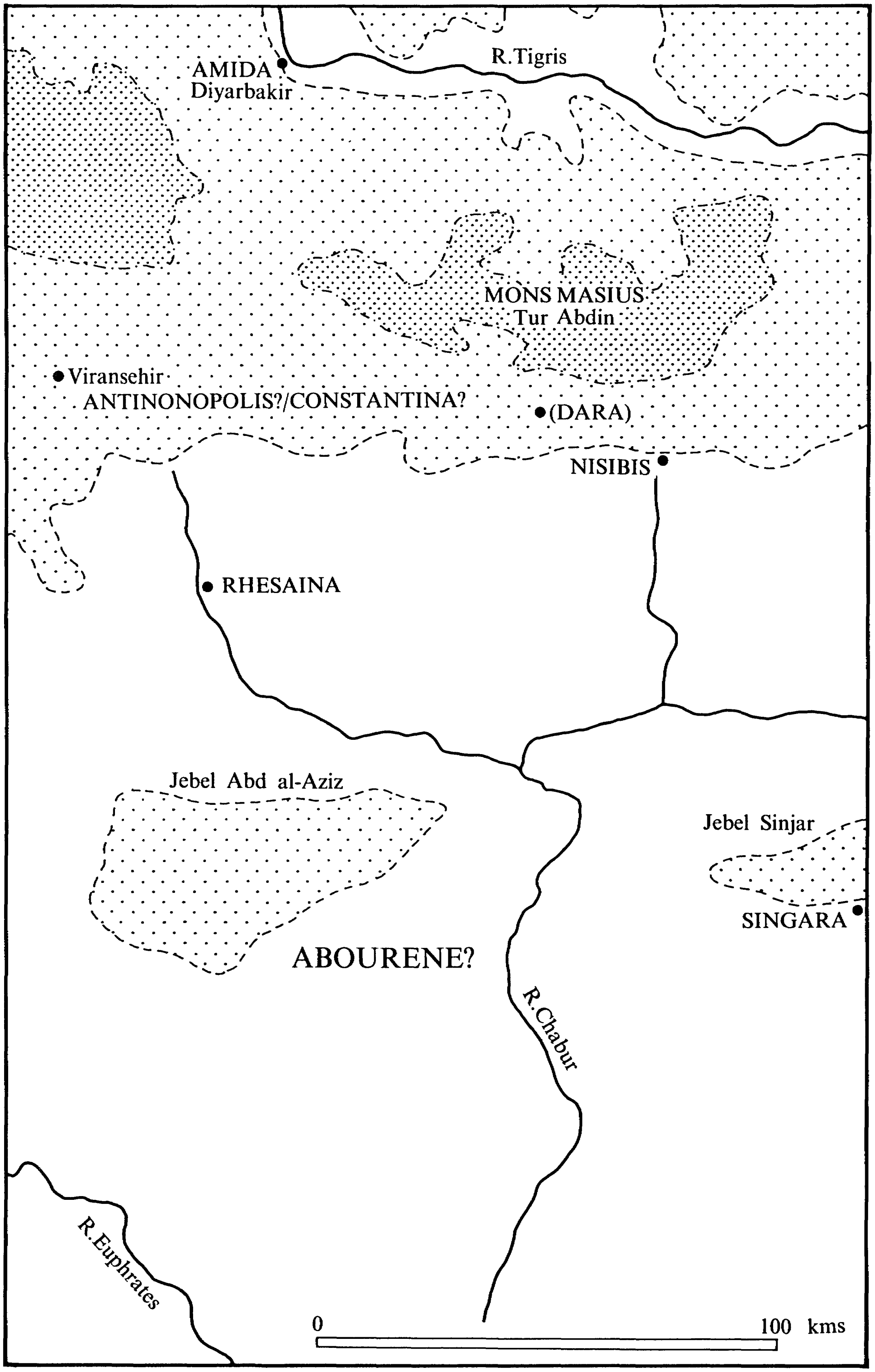

ANTI-LEBANON
(to PALMYRA)
Dumayr
(THELSEA?)
DAMASCUS
Harran al Awamid
LEBABA
Deir Ali
El-Mal
PHAENA
Sanamein
Safa
BATANEA
TRACHONITIS
Nawa
AERITA
SAKKAIA/MAXIMIANOPOLIS
PHILIPPOPOLIS
en-Nemara
KANATHA
Diyatheh
SEEIA
Suweida
AURANITIS
VIA NOVA TRAIANA
ADRAA
BOSTRA
Salhad
Umm al Jimal
Umm al Quttain
(to PHILADELPHIA)
Deir el Kahf
Qasr al Hallabat
Azraq (BASIENSIS?)
Wadi Sirhan
(to DUMATHA)
0
100 kms


ENGEDDI
MACHAERUS
R.ARNON
MASADA
RABBATHMOBA
CHARACHMOBA
ZOARA
Khirbet et Tannur
Wadi Hesa
MAMPSIS
Ed-Dharih
el Telah
VIA NOVA TRAIANA
PHAENO
Wadi Arabah
PETRA
Udruh
Gharandal
Humeima
Yotvata
(to Aila)
0
100 kms

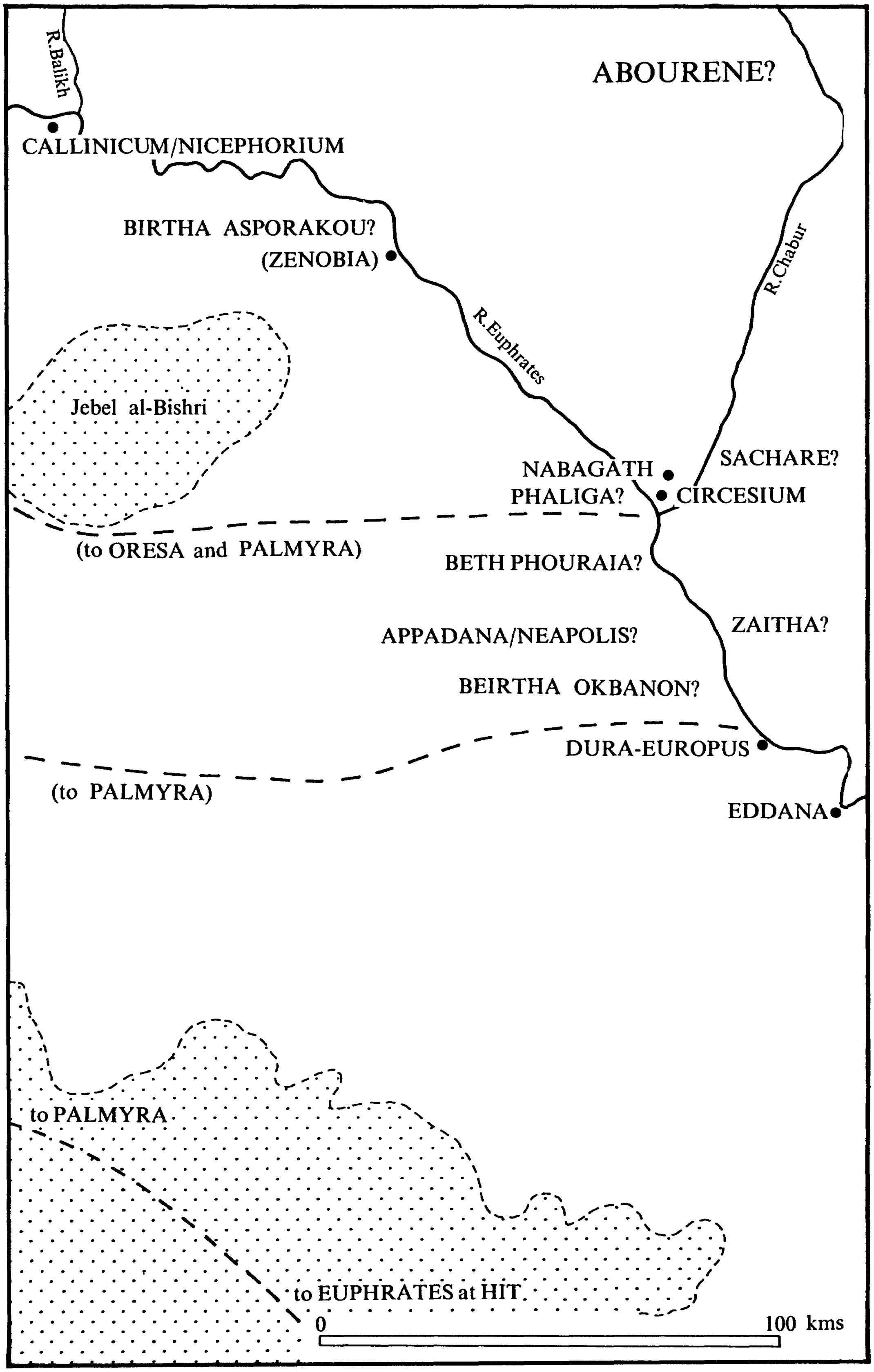

DAMASCUS
Safa
AURANITIS
BOSTRA
Azraq
PHILADELPHIA
JERUSALEM
GAZA
ELUSA
MAMPSIS
OBODA
Wadi Sirhan
Wadi Arabah
PETRA
(to DUMATHA)
AILA
Sinai
LEUKE KOME
Ruwwafa
Hedjaz
Medain Saleh
0
100
200 kms

EASTERN SYRIA, THE EUPHRATES AND WESTERN MESOPOTAMIA


MELITENE
Malatya
TAURUS MTS
Nemrud Dag
ARSAMEIA
Gerger
ARSAMEIA
on NYMPHAIOS
COMMAGENE
Sofraz Koy
SAMOSATA
OSRHOENE
Ayni
EDESSA
R. Scirtus (Daisan)
CARRHAE
ZEUGMA/
SELEUCIA
Birecik
CHARAX SIDOU/
ANTHEMUSIA
(MARCOPOLIS?)
BATANE
R. Euphrates
Serrin
HIERAPOLIS
El Masudiye
R. Balikh
ICHNAE
0
100 kms


R.Tigris
AMIDA
Diyarbakir
MONS MASIUS
Tur Abdin
Viransehir
ANTINONOPOLIS?/CONSTANTINA?
(DARA)
NISIBIS
RHESAINA
Jebel Abd al-Aziz
Jebel Sinjar
SINGARA
ABOURENE?
R.Chabur
R.Euphrates
0
100 kms

THE EASTERN SYRIAN STEPPE AND THE MIDDLE EUPHRATES


R.Balikh
ABOURENE?
CALLINICUM/NICEPHORIUM
BIRTHA ASPORAKOU?
(ZENOBIA)
R.Chabur
R.Euphrates
Jebel al-Bishri
NABAGATH
SACHARE?
PHALIGA?
CIRCESIUM
(to ORESA and PALMYRA)
BETH PHOURAIA?
ZAITHA?
APPADANA/NEAPOLIS?
BEIRTHA OKBANON?
DURA-EUROPUS
(to PALMYRA)
EDDANA
to PALMYRA
to EUPHRATES at HIT
0
100 kms

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